

# STORIES OF VILLAGE AND TOWN LIFE

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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MARY RUSSELL MITFORD











STORIES OF VILLAGE  
AND TOWN LIFE . .

Or Word-Pictures of Old England

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AND TOWN LIFE  
OR WORD PICTURES OF OLD ENGLAND







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# STORIES OF VILLAGE AND TOWN LIFE

Or Word-Pictures of Old England

By  
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Author of "Our Village."

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## PREFACE

IN one of her volumes of stories of rural life Miss Mitford used the following words, which are applicable to the present volume: "The following pages contain an attempt to delineate country scenery and country manners, as they exist in a small village in the south of England. The writer may at least claim the merit of a hearty love of her subject, and of that local and personal familiarity, which only a long residence in one neighbourhood could have enabled her to attain. Her descriptions have always been written on the spot, and at the moment, and in nearly every instance with the closest and most resolute fidelity to the place and the people. If she be accused of having given a brighter aspect to her villagers than is usually met with in books, she cannot help it, and would not if she could. She has painted, as they appeared to her, their little frailties and their many virtues, under an intense and thankful conviction that in every condition of life goodness and happiness may be found by those who seek them, and never more surely

than in the fresh air, the shade, and the sunshine of nature."

The stories which make up this volume have been selected from various annuals which have been brought together after many years collecting by a lover of books. They are presented as reliable pen-pictures of life as it was presented in our country places before the exodus of many of their inhabitants to crowded centres, and of the peaceful days which preceded the advent of the motor-car.

It should be added that the author of these stories was born in 1787, and that she died in 1855.

J. POTTER BRISCOE.

NOTTINGHAM.

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THE LAST OF THE BARBERS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



# Stories of Village and Town Life

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## THE LAST OF THE BARBERS

IN the little, primitive town of Cranley, where I spent the first few years of my life—a town which, but for the distinction of a market and a post-office, might have passed for a moderately sized village ; the houses in that part of the great western road, which passed through it, were so tumbled about, so intermixed with garden walls, garden palings, and garden hedges, to say nothing of stables, farm-yards, pigsties, and barns, that it derogated nothing from the dignity of the handsome and commodious dwelling in which I had the honour to be born, that its next-door neighbour was a barber's shop—a real, genuine, old-fashioned barber's shop—consisting of a low-browed cottage, with a pole before it ; a basin, as bright as Mambrino's helmet, in the window ; a half-

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hatch always open, through which was visible a little dusty hole, where a few wigs, on battered wooden blocks, were ranged round a comfortable shaving chair, and a legend over the door, in which "William Skinner, wig-maker, hairdresser, and barber," was set forth in yellow letters on a blue ground. I left Cranley before I was four years old; and, next to a certain huge wax doll, called Sophy, who died the usual death of wax dolls, by falling out of a nursery window, the most vivid and the pleasantest of my early recollections is our good neighbour, Will Skinner—for by that endearing abbreviation he was called everywhere but in his own inscription. So agreeable, indeed, is the impression which he has left on my memory, that although, doubtless, the he-people find it more convenient to shave themselves, and to dispense with wigs and powder, yet I cannot help regretting, the more for his sake, the decline and extinction of a race, which, besides figuring so notably in the old novels and comedies, formed so genial a link between the higher and lower orders of society; supplying to the rich the most familiar of followers and most harmless of gossips.

It certainly was not Will Skinner's beauty that caught my fancy. His person was hardly of the kind to win a lady's favour, even although that lady were only four years of age. He was an elderly man, with an infirm, feeble step, which gave him the air of being older than

he was ; a lank, long, stooping figure, which seemed wavering in the wind like a powder-puff—a spare, wrinkled visage, with the tremulous appearance about the mouth and cheeks which results from extreme thinness—a pale complexion, scanty white hair, and a beard considerably longer than beseemed his craft.

Neither did his apparel serve greatly to set off his lean and withered person. It was usually composed, within doors, of a faded linen jacket—without, of a grey pepper-and-salt coat, repaired with black—both somewhat the worse for wear—both a “ world too wide for his shrunk sides ”—and both well covered with powder. Dusty as a miller was Will Skinner. Even the hat, which, by frequent reverential applications of his finger and thumb, had become moulded into a perpetual form of salutation, was almost as richly frosted as a churchwarden’s wig. Add to this a white apron, with a comb sticking out of the pocket, shoes clumsily patched (poor Will was his own cobbler) ; blue stockings indifferently darned (he was his own sempstress) ; and a ragged white cravat, marvellously badly ironed (he was also his own washer-woman), and the picture of our barber will be complete.

Good old man ! I see him in my mind’s eye at this moment, lean, wrinkled, shabby, and poor ; slow of speech, and ungainly of aspect, yet pleasant to look at, and delightful to recollect, in spite of rags, ugliness, age, and poverty. It was the contented expression of

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his withered countenance, the cheerful humility of his deportment, and the overflowing kindness of his temper, that rendered Will Skinner so general a favourite. There was nothing within his small power that he was not ready to undertake for anybody—at home in every house, and conversant in every business—the universal help of the place. Poor he was, certainly—as poor as well could be; and lonely—for he had been crossed in love in his youth, and lived alone in his little tenement, with no other companions than his wig-blocks and a tame starling (“pretty company,” he used to call them); but, destitute as he was of worldly goods, and although people loved to talk of him with a kind of gentle pity, I have always considered him as one of the happiest persons of my acquaintance; one “who suffered all as suffering nothing;” a philosopher rather of temperament than of reason; “the only man in the parish,” as mine host of the *Swan* used to observe, “who was foolish enough to take a drink of small beer as thankfully as a draught of double ale.”

His fortunes had, at one time, assumed a more flourishing aspect. Our little insignificant town was one of the richest livings in England, and had been held by the Bishop of \*\*\*, in conjunction with his very poor See. He resided nearly half the year at Cranley Rectory, and was the strenuous friend and patron of our friend Will. A most orthodox person at all points was the Bishop—

portly, comely, and important ; one who had won his way to the Bench by learning and merit, and was rather more finical about his episcopal decorations, and more jealous of his episcopal dignity, than a man early accustomed to artificial distinctions is apt to be. He omitted no opportunity of rustling and bustling in a silk apron, assumed the lawn sleeves whenever it was possible to introduce those inconvenient, but pleasant appendages to the clerical costume, and was so precise in the article of perukes, as to have had one constructed in London on the exact model of the caxon worn by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, which our orthodox divine appears to have considered as a sort of regulation wig. Now this magnificent cauliflower (for such it was) had never been frosted to his Lordship's satisfaction until it came under the hands of Will Skinner, who was immediately appointed his shaver, wig-dresser and wig-maker in ordinary, and recommended by him to all the beards and caxons in the neighbourhood. Nor did the kindness of his right reverend patron end here. Pleased with his barber's simplicity and decency of demeanour, as well as with the zealous manner in which he led the psalmody at church ; quivering forth, in a high, thin voice, the strains of Hopkins and Sternhold, the good Bishop, determined to promote him in that line ; appointed him to the sextonship, which happened to fall vacant ; and caused him to officiate as deputy to David Lane, the parish



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clerk—a man of eighty, worn out in the service, and now bed-ridden with the rheumatism—with a complete understanding that he should succeed to the post, as soon as David were fairly deposited in the church-yard. These were comfortable prospects. But, alas, the Bishop, a hale man of sixty, happened to die first ; and his successor in the rectory, a little, thin, bald-headed person, as sharp as a needle, who shaved himself, and wore no wigs, took such disgust at certain small irregularities, such as marking the evening lessons instead of the morning, forgetting to say Amen in the proper place, and other mistakes, committed by the clerk-deputy when he came to read in, that, instead of the translation to a higher post, which poor Will anticipated, he was within an ace of losing his sextonship, which he was only permitted to retain, on condition of never raising his voice again in a stave so long as he lived ; the new rector, a musical amateur, having been so excruciated by Will's singing, as to be fain to stop his ears. Thus ended all his hopes of church preferment.

After this disaster, the world began to go ill with him. People learned to shave themselves, that was a great evil ; they took to wearing their own hair, that was a greater ; and when the French revolution, and cropped heads, came into fashion, and powder and hair-dressing went out, such was the defalcation of his customers, and the desolate state of his trade, that poor Will, in spite

of the smallness of his wants, and the equanimity of his spirit, found himself nearly at his wit's end. In this dilemma he resolved to turn his hand to other employments, and living in the neighbourhood of a famous trout stream, and becoming possessed of a tattered copy of Izaak Walton's *Complete Angler*, he applied himself to the construction of artificial flies; in which delicate manufacture, facilitated doubtless by his dexterity in wig-weaving, he soon became deservedly eminent.

This occupation he usually followed in his territory, the church-yard—as pleasant a place to be buried in as heart could desire, occupying a gentle eminence by the side of Cranley Down, on which the cricketers of that cricketing country, used to muster two elevens for practice, almost every fine evening, from Easter to Michaelmas. Thither Will, who had been a cricketer himself in his youth, and still loved the wind of a ball, used to resort on summer afternoons; perching himself on a large, square, raised monument, whose very inscription was worn away—a spreading lime tree above his head—Izaak Walton before him, and his implements of trade at his side! I never read that delicious book without remembering how Will Skinner used to study it: skipping the fine pastoral poetry, and still more poetical prose of the dialogues, and poring over the notes, as a housekeeper pores over the receipts in the *Cook's Oracle*, or a journeyman apothecary applies himself to the *London Phar-*

macopeia. Curious directions of a truth they were, and curiously followed. The very list of materials had in it something striking and outlandish ; camel's hair, badger's hair, hog's wool, seal's fur, cock's hackles, a heron's neck, a starling's wing, a mallard's tail, and the crest of a peacock ! These, and a thousand such knick-knacks, a wilderness of fur and feather, were ranged beside him with real nicety, but seeming confusion ; and mingled with flies, finished or in progress, and with homelier and more familiar tools, hooks, bristles, shoe-maker's wax, needles, scissors, marking silk of all colours, and " barge sail for dubbing." And there he sate, now manufacturing a cannon-fly, " dubbing it with black wool, and Isabella-coloured mohair, and bright, brownish bear's hair, warped on with yellow silk, constructing the wings of the feather of a woodcock's wing, and the head of an ash colour," and now watching Tom Taylor's unparagoned bowling, or throwing away the half-dubbed cannon-fly, in admiration of Jem Willis' hits.

On this spot our intimacy commenced. A spoilt child, and an only child, it was my delight to escape from nurse and nursery, and all the restraint of female management, and to follow everywhere the dear papa, my chief spoiler, who so fully returned my partiality, as to have a little pad constructed, on which I used to accompany him in his excursions on horseback. The only place at which his fondness ever allowed him to

think my presence burthensome, was the cricket ground, to which I used regularly to follow him, in spite of all remonstrance and precaution, causing him no small perplexity as to how to bestow me in safety during the game. Will and the monument seemed to offer exactly the desired refuge, and our good neighbour readily consented to fill the post of deputy nursery-maid for the time, assisted in his superintendence by a very beautiful and sagacious black Newfoundland dog, called Coe, who, partly from personal affection, and partly from a sense of duty, used when out to take me under his particular care, and mounted guard over the monument, as well as Will Skinner, who assuredly required all the aid that could be mustered, to cope with my vagaries.

Poor, dear old man, what a life I led him !—now playing at bo-peep on one side of the great monument, and now on the other ; now crawling away amongst the green graves ; now starting up between two head stones ; now shouting in triumph with my small, childish voice, from the low church-yard wall ; now gliding round before him, and laughing up in his face as he sate. Poor, dear old man ! with what undeviating good humour did he endure my naughtiness ! how he would catch me away from the very shadow of danger, if a ball came near ! and how often did he interrupt his own labours to forward my amusement, sliding from his perch to gather lime branches to stick in Coe's collar, or to collect daisies,



buttercups, or ragged-robins, to make what I used to call daisy-beds for my doll.

Perhaps there might be a little self-defence in this last-mentioned kindness ; the picking to pieces of flowers and making of daisy-beds being, as Will well knew, the most efficacious means of hindering me from picking to pieces his oak-flies, or May-flies, or, which was still worse, of constructing others after my own fashion out of his materials ; which, with a spirit of imitation, as innocently mischievous as a monkey, I used to purloin for the purpose the moment his back was turned, mixing martin's fur and otter's fur, and dipping my little fingers amongst brown and red hackles, with an audacity that would have tried the patience of Job. How Will's held out I cannot imagine ! but he never got farther than a very earnest supplication that I would give over helping him, a deprecation of my assistance, a " pray don't, dear Miss ! " that, on remembering the provocation, seems to me a forbearance surpassing that of Grisildis. What is the loss of a good-for-nothing husband, and even the cooking his second wedding dinner (so I believe the story runs), compared to seeing an elf of four years old, mixing and oversetting the thousand-and-one materials of fly making ? Grisildis was nothing compared to Will Skinner !

And yet, to do myself justice, my intentions towards my friend the fly-maker were perfectly friendly. Mischievous as I undoubtedly was, I did not intend to do



mischief. If I filched from him, I filched for him ; would court the cook for feathers of barn-door fowls, of pheasants and partridges ; beg the old jays and black-birds, which were hung up *in terrorem* in the cherry trees, from the gardener ; dragged a great bit of Turkey carpet to the church-yard, because I had heard him say it made good dubbing ; got into a *démêlé* with a peacock in the neighbourhood, from seizing a piece of his tail, to make the bodies of Will's dragon-flies, and had an affair with a pig, in an attempt to procure that staple commodity, hog's down. N.B.—The hog had the better of that battle ; and but for the intervention of my friend Coe, who seeing the animal in chase of me, ran to the rescue, and pulled him back by the tail, I might have rued my attack upon those pig's ears (for behind them grows the commodity in question), to this very hour.

Besides the torment that I unconsciously gave him, poor Will had not always reason to congratulate himself on the acquaintance of my faithful follower Coe. He was, as I have said, a dog of great accomplishments and sagacity, and possessed in perfection all the tricks which boys and servants love so well to teach to this docile and noble race. Now it so happened that our Barber, in the general desolation of wig-weavers at Cranley, retained one constant customer, a wealthy grocer, who had been churchwarden ever since the Bishop's time, and still emulated that regretted prelate in the magnificence of

his peruke ; wearing a caxon, such as I have seldom seen on any head, except that of Mr. Fawcett on the stage, and of Dr. Parr off.

Mr. Samuel Saunders, such was the name of our churchwarden, having had the calamity to lose a wife, whom he had wedded some forty years before, was, as the talk went, paying his addresses to pretty Jenny Wren, the bar-maid at the *Swan*. Samuel was a thick, short, burley person, with a red nose, a red waistcoat, and a cinnamon-coloured coat, altogether a very proper wearer of the buzz wig. If all the men in Cranley could have been ranged in a row, the wig would have been assigned to him in right of look and demeanour, just as the hats in one corner of Hogarth's print, the Election Ball, can be put each on the proper head without difficulty. The man and the wig matched each other. Now Jenny Wren was no match for either. She was a pretty, airy, jaunty girl, with a merry hazel eye, a ready smile, and a nimble tongue, the arrantest flirt in Cranley, talking to every beau in the parish, but listening only to tall Thomas, our handsome groom.

An ill match for Mr. Samuel Saunders at sixty, or for Samuel Saunders's wig, was the pretty coquette Jenny Wren at eighteen ! The disparity was painful to think of. But it was the old story. Samuel was wealthy, and Jenny poor ; and uncles, aunts, friends, and cousins, coaxed and remonstrated—and poor Jenny pouted and

cried—vowed fifty times a-day that she would not marry him if he were fifty times as rich ;—till, at length, worn out with importunity, exhausted by the violence of her own opposition ; offended by the supineness of her favourite lover ; and perhaps a little moved by the splendour of the churchwarden's presents, she began to relent, and finally consented to the union.

The match was now talked of as certain by all the gossips in Cranley—some had even gone so far as to fix the wedding-day ; when one evening our handsome groom, tall Thomas, poor Jenny's favourite beau, passing by Will Skinner's shop, followed by Coe, saw a new wig, of Samuel Saunders's pattern, doubtless the identical wedding-wig, reposing in full friz on one of the battered wooden blocks. " Heigh, Coe ! " said Thomas, making a sign with his hand ; and in an instant Coe had sprung over the half-hatch into the vacant shop—had seized the well-powdered periwig ; and in another instant returned with it into the street, and followed Thomas, wig in mouth, into the little bar at the *Swan*, where sate Mr. Samuel Saunders, making love to Jenny Wren !

The sudden apparition of his wig, borne in so unexpected a manner, wholly discomfited the unlucky suitor, and even dumb-founded his fair mistress. " Heigh, Coe ! heigh ! " repeated Thomas ; and, at the word, Coe, letting drop the first caxon, sprang upon that living block, Samuel Saunders's noddle, snatched off the other wig,

and deposited both his trophies at Jenny's feet!—a catastrophe which was followed, in less than a month, by the marriage of the handsome groom and the pretty bar-maid; for the churchwarden, who had withstood all other rebuffs, was driven for ever from the field by the peals of laughter which, after the first surprise was over, burst irrepressibly from both the lovers. In less than a month they were married; and Will Skinner and Coe, who had hitherto avoided each other by mutual consent, met as guests at the wedding-dinner; and, through the good offices of the bridegroom, were completely and permanently reconciled—Coe's consciousness being far more difficult to conquer than the short-lived anger of the most placable of Barbers.

## THE COBBLER OVER THE WAY



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## THE COBBLER OVER THE WAY

ONE of the noisiest inhabitants of the small irregular town of Cranley, in which I had the honour to be born, was a certain cobbler, by name Jacob Giles. He lived exactly over-right our house, in a little appendage to the baker's shop—an excrescence from that goodly tenement, which, when the door was closed (for the little square window at its side was all but invisible), might, from its shape and its dimensions, be mistaken for an oven or a pigstye, *ad libitum*. By day, when the half-hatch was open, and the cobbler discovered at work within, his dwelling seemed constructed purposely to hold his figure; as nicely adapted to its size and motions, as the little toy called a weather-house is to the height and functions of the puppets who inhabit it;—only that Jacob Giles's stall was less accommodating than the weather-house, inasmuch as by no chance could his apartment have been made to contain two inmates in any position whatsoever.

At that half-hatch might Jacob Giles be seen stitching and stitching, with the peculiar regular two-handed jerk

proper to the art of cobbling, from six in the morning to six at night,—deducting always certain mornings and afternoons and whole days given, whenever his purse or his credit would permit, to the ensnaring seductions of the tap-room at the *King's Head*. At all other seasons at the half-hatch he might be seen, looking so exactly like a Dutch picture, that I, simple child that I was, took a fine Teniers in my father's possession for a likeness of him. There he sate—with a dirty red night-cap over his grizzled hair, a dingy waistcoat, an old blue coat, darned, patched and ragged, a greasy leather apron, a pair of crimson plush inexpressibles, worsted stockings of all the colours known in hosiery, and shoes that illustrated the old saying of the shoemaker's wife, by wanting mending more than any shoes in the parish.

The face belonging to this costume was rough and weather-beaten, deeply lined and deeply tinted, of a right copper-colour, with a nose that would have done honour to Bardolph, and a certain indescribable half-tipsy look, even when sober. Nevertheless, the face, ugly and tipsy as it was, had its merits. There was humour in the wink and in the nod, and in the knowing roll with which he transferred the quid of tobacco, his constant recreation and solace, from one cheek to the other; there was good-humour in the half-shut eye, the pursed-up mouth, and the whole jolly visage; and in the countless variety of strange songs and ballads which,

from morning to night, he poured forth from that half-hatch, there was a happy mixture of both. There he sate, in that small den, looking something like a thrush in a goldfinch's cage, and singing with as much power, and far wider range,—albeit his notes were hardly so melodious :—Jobson's songs in the “ Devil to Pay,” and

“ A cobbler there was, and he lived in a stall,  
Which served him for parlour, for kitchen and hall,”

being his favourites.

The half-hatch was, however, incomparably the best place in which to see him, for his face, with all its grotesqueness, was infinitely pleasanter to look at than his figure, one of his legs being shorter than the other, which obliged him to use a crutch, and the use of the crutch having occasioned a protuberance of the shoulder, which very nearly invested him with the dignity of a hump. Little cared he for his lameness ! He swung along merrily and rapidly, especially when his steps tended to the ale-house, where he was a man of prime importance, not merely in right of his good songs and his good-fellowship, but in graver moments, as a scholar and a politician, being the best reader of a newspaper, and the most sagacious commentator on a debate, of any man who frequented the tap, the parish clerk himself not excepted.

Jacob Giles had, as he said, some right to talk about

the welfare of old England, having, at one time of his life, been a householder, shopkeeper, and elector (N.B.—his visits to the ale-house may account for his descent from the shop to the stall) in the neighbouring borough of D., a place noted for the frequency and virulence of its contested elections. There was no event of his life on which our cobbler piqued himself so much as on having, as he affirmed, assisted in “saving his country,” by forming one of the glorious majority of seven, by which a Mr. Brown, of those days, a silent, stupid, respectable country gentleman, a dead vote on one side of the house, ousted a certain Mr. Smith, also a country gentleman, equally silent, stupid, and respectable, and a dead vote on the other side. Which parties in the state these two worthy senators espoused, it was somewhat difficult to gather from the zealous champion of the victorious hero. Local politics have commonly very little to do with any general question: the blues or the yellows, the greens or the reds—colours, not principles, predominate at an election,—which, in this respect, as well as in the ardour of the contest, and the quantity of money risked on the event, bears no small resemblance to a horse-race.

Whatever might have been the party of his favourite candidate, Jacob himself was a Tory of the very first water. His residence at Cranley was during the later days of the French Revolution, when Loyalty and Re-



publicanism, Pittite and Foxite divided the land. Jacob Giles was a Tory, a Pittite, a Church-and-King, and Life-and-Fortune man—the loudest of the loyal; held Buonaparte for an incarnation of the evil spirit, and established an Anti-Gallican club at the *King's Head*, where he got tipsy every Saturday-night for the good of the nation. Nothing could exceed the warmth of Jacob's loyalty. He even wanted to join the Cranley volunteers, quoting to the drill serjeant, who quietly pointed to the crutch and the shoulder, the notable examples of Captain Green who halted, and Lieutenant Jones who was awry, as precedents for his own eligibility. The hump and the limp united were, however, too much to be endured. The man of scarlet declared there was no such piece of deformity in the whole awkward squad, and Jacob was declared inadmissible;—a personal slight (to say nothing of his being debarred the privilege of shedding his blood in defence of the king and constitution) which our cobbler found so hard to bear, that with the least encouragement in the world from the Opposition of Cranley, he would have ratted. One word of sympathy would have carried Mr. Giles, and his songs and his tipsyness to the “Russell-and-Sidney Club” (Jacobins, Jacob used to call them), at the *Greyhound*; but the Jacobins laughed, and lost their proselyte; the Anti-Gallicans retained Jacob,—and Jacob retained his consistency.

How my friend the cobbler came to be theoretically so violent an Anti-jacobin is best known to himself. For certain he was in practice far more of what would in these days be called a Radical ; was constantly infringing the laws which he esteemed so perfect, and bringing into contempt the authorities for which he professed such enthusiastic veneration. Drunk or sober, in his own quarrels, or in the quarrels of others, he waged a perpetual war with justice ; hath been seen to snap his fingers at an order of Sessions, the said order having for object the removal of a certain barrel-organ man, “ his ancient trusty, drouthy crony ; ” and got into a *démêlé* with the church in the person of the old Sexton, whom he nearly knocked down with the wind of his crutch (N.B.—Jacob took care not to touch the old man) for driving away his clients, the boys who were playing at marbles on the tomb-stones. Besides these skirmishes, he was in a state of constant hostility with the officials called constables ; and had not his reputation, good or bad, stood him in stead, his Saturday-nights’ exploits would have brought him acquainted with half the round-houses, bridewells, stocks, and whipping-posts in the country. His demerits brought him off. “ It’s only that merry rogue, Jacob ! ” said the lenient : “ only that sad dog, the cobbler ! ” cried the severe : and between these contrary epithets, which in Master Giles’s case bore so exactly the same meaning, the poor cobbler escaped,

In good truth, it would have been a pity if Jacob's hebdomadal deviations from the straight path had brought him into any serious scrape, for, tipsy or sober, a better-natured creature never lived. Poor as he was, he had always something for those poorer than himself; would share his scanty dinner with a starving beggar, and his last quid of tobacco with a crippled sailor. The children came to him for nuts and apples, for comical stories and droll songs; the very curs of the street knew that they had a friend in the poor cobbler. He even gave away his labour and his time. Many a shoe hath he heeled with a certainty that the wretched pauper could not pay him; and many a job, extra-official, hath he turned his hand to, with no expectation of fee or reward. The "Cobbler over the way" was the constant resource of every body in want of a help, and whatever the station or circumstances of the person needing him, his services might be depended on to the best of his power.

For my own part, I can recollect Jacob Giles as long as I can recollect any thing. He made the shoes for my first doll—(pink I remember they were)—a doll called Sophy, who had the misfortune to break her neck by a fall from the nursery window. Jacob Giles made her pink slippers, and mended all the shoes of the family, with whom he was a universal favourite. My father delighted in his statesmanship, which must have been

very entertaining ; my mother in his benevolence ; and I in his fun. He used to mimic Punch for my amusement ; and I once greatly affronted the real Punch, by preferring the cobbler's performance of the closing scenes. Jacob was a general favourite in our family ; and one member of it was no small favourite of Jacob's : that person was neither more nor less than my nursery-maid, Nancy Dawson.

Nancy Dawson was the daughter of a farmer in the neighbourhood, a lively, clever girl, more like a French *soubrette* than an English maid-servant, *gentille* and *espiègle* ; not a regular beauty,—hardly perhaps pretty ; but with bright laughing eyes, a ready smile, a pleasant speech, and altogether as dangerous a person for an opposite neighbour as an old bachelor could desire. Jacob became seriously enamoured ; wasted half his mornings in watching our windows, for my nursery looked out upon the street ; and limped after us every afternoon when she took me (a small damsel of three years old, or thereabout) out walking. He even left off his tobacco, his worsted night-cap, his tipsyness, and his Saturday-night's club ; got a whole coat to his back, set a patch on his shoe, and talked of taking a shop and settling in life. This, however, was nothing wonderful. Nancy's charms might have fired a colder heart than beat in the bosom of Jacob Giles. But that Nancy should “ abase her eyes ” on him : there was the marvel.



Nancy ! who had refused Peter Green the grocer, and John Keep the butcher, and Sir Henry's smart game-keeper, and our own tall footman ! Nancy to think of a tippling cripple like the cobbler over the way,—that was something to wonder at !

Nancy, when challenged on the subject, neither denied nor assented to the accusation. She answered very demurely that her young lady liked Mr. Giles, that he made the child laugh, and was handy with her, and was a careful person to leave her with if she had to go on an errand for her mistress or the housekeeper. So Jacob continued our walking footman.

Our walks were all in one direction. About a mile south of Cranley was a large and beautiful coppice, at one corner of which stood the cottage of the woodman, a fine young man, William Wheeler by name, whose sister Mary was employed by my mother as a sempstress. The wood, the cottage, and the cottage garden, were separated by a thick hedge and wide ditch from a wild broken common covered with sheep—a common full of turfy knolls and thymy banks, where the heath flower and the hare-bell blew profusely, and where the sun poured forth a flood of glory on the golden-blossomed broom. To one corner of this common,—a sunny nook, covered with little turfy hillocks, originally, I suppose, formed by the moles, but which I used to call Cock-Robins' graves,—Nancy generally led ; and there she



would frequently, almost constantly, leave me under Jacob's protection whilst she jumped over a stile inaccessible to my little feet, sometimes to take a message to Mary Wheeler, sometimes to get me flowers from the wood, sometimes for blackberries, sometimes for nuts,—but always on some ostensible and well-sounding errand.

Nancy's absences, however, became longer and longer ; and one evening Jacob and I grew mutually fidgety. He had told his drollest stories, made his most comical faces, and played Punch twice over to divert me ; but I was tired and cross. It was getting late in the autumn ; the weather was cold ; the sun had gone down ; and I began to cry amain for home and for papa. Jacob, much distressed by my plight, partly to satisfy me, and partly to allay his own irritability, deposited me in the warmest nook he could find, and scrambled over the stile in search of Nancy. Voices in the wood—her voice and William's—guided him to the spot where she and the young forester sate side by side at the foot of an oak tree ; and, unseen by the happy couple, the poor cobbler overheard the following dialogue.

“ On Saturday then, Nancy, I may give in the banns. You are sure that your mistress will let your sister take your place till she is suited ? ”

“ Quite sure,” rejoined Nancy ; “ she is so kind.”

“ And on Monday fortnight the wedding is to be.





Remember, not an hour later than eight o'clock on Monday fortnight. Consider how long I have waited—almost half a year.”

“Well!” said Nancy, “at eight o'clock on Monday fortnight.”

“And the cobbler!” cried William; “that excellent under-nurse, who is waiting so contentedly on our little lady at the other side of the hedge”—

“Ah, the poor cobbler!” interrupted Nancy.

“We'll ask him to the wedding-dinner,” added William.

“Yes; the poor cobbler!” continued the saucy maiden; “my old lover, the ‘Cobbler over the way,’ we'll certainly ask him to the wedding-dinner. It will comfort him.”

And to the wedding-dinner the cobbler went; and he was comforted:—he kissed the pretty bride; he shook hands with the handsome bridegroom, resumed his red cap and his tobacco, got tipsy to his heart's content, and reeled home singing “God save the King,” right happy to find himself still a bachelor.





## THE COUSINS

1845-1846

## THE COUSINS

TOWARDS the middle of the principal street in my native town of Cranley, stands, or did stand, for I speak of things that happened many years back, a very long-fronted, very regular, very ugly brick house, whose large gravelled court, flanked on each side by offices reaching to the street, was divided from the pavement by iron gates and palisades, and a row of Lombardy poplars, rearing their slender columns so as to veil, without shading, a mansion which evidently considered itself, and was considered by its neighbours, as holding the first rank in the place. That mansion, indisputably the best in the town, belonged, of course, to the lawyer ; and that lawyer was, as may not unfrequently be found in small places, one of the most eminent solicitors in the county.

Richard Molesworth, the individual in question, was a person obscurely born and slenderly educated, who, by dint of prudence, industry, integrity, tact, and luck, had risen through the various gradations of writing clerk, managing clerk, and junior partner, to be himself the

head of a great office, and a man of no small property or slight importance. Half of Cranley belonged to him, for he had the passion for brick and mortar often observed among those who have accumulated large fortunes in totally different pursuits, and liked nothing better than running up rows and terraces, repairing villas, and rebuilding farm houses. The better half of Cranley called him master, to say nothing of six or seven snug farms in the neighbourhood, of the goodly estate and manor of Hinton, famous for its preserves and fisheries, or of a command of floating capital which borrowers, who came to him with good securities in their hands, found almost inexhaustible. In short, he was one of those men with whom every thing had prospered through life ; and, in spite of a profession too often obnoxious to an unjust, because sweeping, prejudice, there was a pretty universal feeling amongst all who knew him that his prosperity was deserved. A kind temper, a moderate use of power and influence, a splendid hospitality, and that judicious liberality which shows itself in small things as well as in great ones (for it is by twopenny savings that men get an ill name), served to ensure his popularity with high and low. Perhaps, even his tall, erect, portly figure, his good-humoured countenance, cheerful voice, and frank address, contributed something to his reputation ; his remarkable want of pretension or assumption of any sort certainly did, and

as certainly the absence of every thing striking, clever, or original, in his conversation. That he must be a man of personal as well as of professional ability, no one tracing his progress through life could for a moment doubt ; but, reversing the witty epigram on our wittiest monarch, he reserved his wisdom for his actions, and whilst all that he *did* showed the most admirable sense and judgment, he never *said* a word that rose above the level of the merest common-place, vapid, inoffensive, dull, and safe.

So accomplished, both in what he was and in what he was not, our lawyer, at the time of which we write, had been for many years the oracle of the country gentlemen, held all public offices not inconsistent with each other, which their patronage could bestow, and in the shape of stewardships, trusts, and agencies, managed half the landed estates in the county. He was even admitted into visiting intercourse, on a footing of equality very uncommon in the aristocratic circles of country society—a society which is, for the most part, quite as exclusive as that of London, though in a different way. For this he was well suited, not merely by his own unaffected manners, high animal spirits, and nicety of tact, but by the circumstances of his domestic arrangements. After having been twice married, Mr. Molesworth found himself, at nearly sixty, a second time a widower.

His first wife had been a homely, frugal, managing



woman, whose few hundred pounds and her saving habits had, at that period of his life, for they were early united, conduced in their several ways to enrich and benefit her equally thrifty but far more aspiring husband. She never had a child ; and, after doing him all possible good in her lifetime, was so kind as to die just as his interest and his ambition required more liberal house-keeping and higher connexion, each of which, as he well knew, would repay its cost. For connexion accordingly he married, choosing the elegant though portionless sister of a poor baronet, by whom he had two daughters, at intervals of seven years ; the eldest being just of sufficient age to succeed her mother as mistress of the family, when she had the irreparable misfortune to lose the earliest, the tenderest, and the most inestimable friend that a young woman can have. Very precious was the memory of her dear mother to Agnes Molesworth ! Although six years had passed between her death and the period at which our little story begins, the affectionate daughter had never ceased to lament her loss.

It was to his charming daughters that Mr. Molesworth's pleasant house owed its chief attraction. Conscious of his own deficient education, no pains or money had been spared in accomplishing them to the utmost height of fashion.

The least accomplished was, however, as not unfrequently happens, by far the most striking ; and many

a high-born and wealthy client, disposed to put himself thoroughly at ease at his solicitor's table, and not at all shaken in his purpose by the sight of the pretty Jessy,—a short, light, airy girl, with a bright sparkling countenance, all lilies and roses, and dimples and smiles, sitting, exquisitely dressed, in an elegant morning room, with her guitar in her lap, her harp at her side, and her drawing table before her,—has suddenly felt himself awed into his best and most respectful breeding, when introduced to her retiring but self-possessed elder sister, dressed with an almost matronly simplicity, and evidently full not of her own airs and graces, but of the modest and serious courtesy which becomed her station as the youthful mistress of the house.

Dignity, a mild and gentle but still a most striking dignity, was the prime characteristic of Agnes Molesworth in look and in mind. Her beauty was the beauty of sculpture, as contradistinguished from that of painting; depending mainly on form and expression, and little on colour. There could hardly be a stronger contrast than existed between the marble purity of her finely-grained complexion, the softness of her deep grey eye, the calm composure of her exquisitely moulded features, and the rosy cheeks, the brilliant glances, and the playful animation, of Jessy. In a word, Jessy was a pretty girl, and Agnes was a beautiful woman. Of these several facts both sisters were of course perfectly aware; Jessy,

because every body told her so, and she must have been deaf to have escaped the knowledge ; Agnes, from some process equally certain, but less direct ; for few would have ventured to take the liberty of addressing a personal compliment to one evidently too proud to find pleasure in any thing so nearly resembling flattery as praise.

Few, excepting her looking-glass and her father, had ever told Agnes that she was handsome, and yet she was as conscious of her surpassing beauty as Jessy of her sparkling prettiness ; and, perhaps, as a mere question of appearance and becomingness, there might have been as much coquetry in the severe simplicity of attire and of manner which distinguished one sister, as in the elaborate adornment and innocent showing-off of the other. There was, however, between them exactly such a real and internal difference of taste and of character as the outward show served to indicate. Both were true, gentle, good, and kind ; but the elder was as much loftier in mind as in stature, was full of high pursuit and noble purpose ; had abandoned drawing, from feeling herself dissatisfied with her own performances, as compared with the works of real artists ; reserved her musical talent entirely for her domestic circle, because she put too much of soul into that delicious art to make it a mere amusement ; and was only saved from becoming a poetess by her almost exclusive devotion to the very great in poetry—to Wordsworth, to Milton, and to

Shakespeare. These tastes she very wisely kept to herself ; but they gave a higher and firmer tone to her character and manners ; and more than one peer, when seated at Mr. Molesworth's hospitable table, has thought with himself how well his beautiful daughter would become a coronet.

Marriage, however, seemed little in her thoughts. Once or twice, indeed, her kind father had pressed on her the brilliant establishments that had offered,—but her sweet questions, “ Are you tired of me ? Do you wish me away ? ” had always gone straight to his heart, and had put aside for the moment the ambition of his nature even for this his favourite child.

Of Jessy, with all her youthful attraction, he had always been less proud, perhaps less fond. Besides, her destiny he had long in his own mind considered as decided. Charles Woodford, a poor relation, brought up by his kindness, and recently returned into his family from a great office in London, was the person on whom he had long ago fixed for the husband of his youngest daughter, and for the immediate partner and eventual successor to his great and flourishing business :—a choice that seemed fully justified by the excellent conduct and remarkable talents of his orphan cousin, and by the apparently good understanding and mutual affection that subsisted between the young people.

This arrangement was the more agreeable to him, as,



providing munificently for Jessy, it allowed him the privilege of making, as in lawyer-phrase he used to boast, "an elder son" of Agnes, who would, by this marriage of her younger sister, become one of the richest heiresses of the county. He had even, in his own mind, elected her future spouse, in the person of a young baronet who had lately been much at the house, and in favour of whose expected addresses (for the proposal had not yet been made—the gentleman had gone no farther than attentions) he had determined to exert the paternal authority which had so long lain dormant.

But in the affairs of love, as of all others, man is born to disappointment. "*L'homme propose, et Dieu dispose,*" is never truer than in the great matter of matrimony. So found poor Mr. Molesworth, who—Jessy having arrived at the age of eighteen, and Charles at that of two-and-twenty,—offered his pretty daughter and the lucrative partnership to his pennyless relation, and was petrified with astonishment and indignation to find the connexion very respectfully but very firmly declined. The young man was very much distressed and agitated; "he had the highest respect for Miss Jessy; but he could not marry her—he loved another!" And then he poured forth a confidence as unexpected as it was undesired by his incensed patron, who left him in undiminished wrath and increased perplexity.

This interview had taken place immediately after



breakfast ; and when the conference was ended, the provoked father sought his daughters, who, happily unconscious of all that had occurred, were amusing themselves in their splendid conservatory—a scene always as becoming as it is agreeable to youth and beauty. Jessy was flitting about like a butterfly amongst the fragrant orange trees and the bright geraniums ; Agnes standing under a superb fuchsia that hung over a large marble basin, her form and attitude, her white dress, and the classical arrangement of her dark hair, giving her the look of some nymph or naiad, a rare relic of Grecian art. Jessy was prattling gaily, as she wandered about, of a concert which they had attended the evening before at the county town :

“ I hate concerts ! ” said the pretty little flirt. “ To sit bolt upright on a hard bench for four hours, between the same four people, without the possibility of moving, or of speaking to any body, or of any body’s getting to us ! Oh ! how tiresome it is ! ”

“ I saw Sir Edmund trying to slide through the crowd to reach you,” said Agnes, a little archly : “ his presence would, perhaps, have mitigated the evil. But the barricade was too complete ; he was forced to retreat, without accomplishing his object.”

“ Yes, I assure you, he thought it very tiresome ; he told me so when we were coming out. And then the music ! ” pursued Jessy ; “ the noise that they call

music ! Sir Edmund says that he likes no music except my guitar, or a flute on the water ; and I like none except your playing on the organ, and singing Handel on a Sunday evening, or Charles Woodford's reading Milton and bits of Hamlet."

"Do you call that music ?" asked Agnes, laughing. "And yet," continued she, "it is most truly so, with his rich Pasta-like voice, and his fine sense of sound ; and to you, who do not greatly love poetry for its own sake, it is doubtless a pleasure much resembling in kind that of hearing the most thrilling of melodies on the noblest of instruments. I myself have felt such a gratification in hearing that voice recite the verses of Homer or of Sophocles in the original Greek. Charles Woodford's reading *is* music."

"It is a music which you are neither of you likely to hear again," interrupted Mr. Molesworth, advancing suddenly towards them ; "for he has been ungrateful, and I have discarded him."

Agnes stood as if petrified : "Ungrateful ! oh, father !"

"You can't have discarded him, to be sure, papa," said Jessy, always good-natured ; "poor Charles ! what can he have done ?"

"Refused your hand, child," said the angry parent ; "refused to be my partner and son-in-law, and fallen in love with another lady ! What have you to say for him now ?"

"Why really, papa," replied Jessy, "I'm much more obliged to him for refusing my hand than to you for offering it. I like Charles very well for a cousin, but I should not like such a husband at all, so that if this refusal be the worst that has happened, there's no great harm done." And off the gipsy ran; declaring that she must put on her habit, for she had promised to ride with Sir Edmund and his sister, and expected them every minute.

The father and his favourite daughter remained in the conservatory.

"That heart is untouched, however," said Mr. Molesworth, looking after her with a smile.

"Untouched by Charles Woodford, undoubtedly," replied Agnes, "but has he really refused my sister?"

"Absolutely."

"And does he love another?"

"He says so, and I believe him."

"Is he loved again?"

"That he did not say."

"Did he tell you the name of the lady?"

"Yes."

"Do you know her?"

"Yes."

"Is she worthy of him?"

"Most worthy."

"Has he any hope of gaining her affections? Oh!

he must ! he must ! What woman could refuse him ? ”

“ He is determined not to try. The lady whom he loves is above him in every way ; and much as he has counteracted my wishes, it is an honourable part of Charles Woodford’s conduct, that he intends to leave his affection unsuspected by its object.”

Here ensued a short pause in the dialogue, during which Agnes appeared trying to occupy herself with collecting the blossoms of a Cape jessamine and watering a favourite geranium ; but it would not do : the subject was at her heart, and she could not force her mind to indifferent occupations. She returned to her father, who had been anxiously watching her motions and the varying expression of her countenance, and resumed the conversation.

“ Father ! perhaps it is hardly maidenly to avow so much, but although you have never in set words told me your intentions, I have yet seen and known, I can hardly tell how, all that your too kind partiality towards me has designed for your children. You have mistaken me, dearest father, doubly mistaken me ; first, in thinking me fit to fill a splendid place in society ; next, in imagining that I desired such splendour. You meant to give Jessy and the lucrative partnership to Charles Woodford, and designed me and your large possessions to our wealthy and titled neighbour. And with some little change of

persons these arrangements may still for the most part hold good. Sir Edmund may still be your son-in-law and your heir, for he loves Jessy, and Jessy loves him. Charles Woodford may still be your partner and your adopted son, for nothing has chanced that need diminish your affection or his merit. Marry him to the woman he loves. She must be ambitious indeed, if she be not content with such a destiny. And let me live on with you, dear father, single and unwedded, with no thought but to contribute to your comfort, to cheer and brighten your declining years. Do not let your too great fondness for me stand in the way of their happiness! Make me not so odious to them and to myself, dear father! Let me live always with you, and for you—always your own poor Agnes!” And, blushing at the earnestness with which she had spoken, she bent her head over the marble basin, whose waters reflected the fair image, as if she had really been the Grecian statue to which, whilst he listened, her fond father’s fancy had compared her: “Let me live single with you, and marry Charles to the woman whom he loves.”

“Have you heard the name of the lady in question? Have you formed any guess whom she may be?”

“Not the slightest. I imagined from what you said that she was a stranger to me. Have I ever seen her?”

“You may see her—at least you may see her reflection in the water, at this very moment; for he has had the



infinite presumption, the admirable good taste, to fall in love with his cousin Agnes ! ”

“ Father ! ”

“ And now, mine own sweetest ! do you still wish to live single with me ? ”

“ Oh, father ! father ! ”

“ Or do you desire that I should marry Charles to the woman of his heart ? ”

“ Father ! dear father ! ”

“ Choose, my Agnes ! It shall be as you command. Speak freely. Do not cling so around me, but speak ! ”

“ Oh, my dear father ! Cannot we all live together ? I cannot leave you. But poor Charles—surely, father, we may all live together ! ”

And so it was settled ; and a very few months proved that love had contrived better for Mr. Molesworth than he had done for himself. Jessy, with her prettiness, and her title, and her fopperies, was the very thing to be vain of—the very thing to visit for a day ;—but Agnes, and the cousin whose noble character and splendid talents so well deserved her, made the pride and the happiness of his home.

## THE RUSTIC WREATH

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## THE RUSTIC WREATH.

FEW things are more delightful, than to saunter along the green lanes of Berkshire, in the busy harvest time ;—the deep verdure of the hedge-rows, and the strong shadow of the trees, contrasting so vividly with the fields, partly waving with golden corn, partly studded with regular piles of heavy wheat-sheaves ; the whole rustic population abroad ; the entire earth teeming with fruitfulness, and the bright autumn sun careering over head, amidst the deep blue sky, and the white fleecy clouds of the most glowing and least fickle of the seasons. Even a solitary walk loses its loneliness in the general cheerfulness of nature. The air is gay with bees and butterflies ; the robin twitters from amongst the ripening hazel-nuts ; and you cannot proceed a quarter of a mile without encountering some merry group of leasers or reapers, or some long line of huge majestic wains, groaning under their rich burthen, brushing the close hedges on either side, and knocking their tall tops against the overhanging trees—the very image of ponderous plenty.

Pleasant, however, as such a procession is to look at,

it is somewhat dangerous to meet, especially in a narrow lane ; and I thought myself very fortunate, one day last August, in being so near a five-barred gate, as to be enabled to escape from a cortège of labourers and harvest-waggons, sufficiently bulky and noisy to convoy half the wheat in the parish. On they went, men, women, and children, shouting, singing, and laughing, in joyous expectation of the coming Harvest-Home,—the very waggons nodding from side to side, as if tipsy, and threatening, every moment, to break down bank, and tree, and hedge, and crush every obstacle that opposed them. It would have been as safe to encounter the Car of Jugger-naut : I blest my stars for my escape, and after leaning on the friendly gate, until the last gleaner had passed,—a tattered rogue of seven years old, who, with hair as white as flax, a skin as brown as a berry, and features as grotesque as an Indian idol, was brandishing his tuft of wheat-ears, and shrieking forth, in a shrill childish voice, and with a most ludicrous gravity, the popular song of “ Buy a Broom,”—after watching this young gentleman (the urchin is of my acquaintance,) as long as a curve in the lane would permit, I turned to examine in what spot chance had placed me, and found before my eyes another picture of rural life, but one as different from that which I had just witnessed as the Arcadian peasants of Poussin from the boors of Teniers, or weeds from flowers, or poetry from prose.







I had taken refuge in a harvest-field belonging to my good neighbour, Farmer Creswell. A beautiful child lay on the ground, at some little distance, whilst a young girl, resting from the labour of reaping, was twisting a rustic wreath,—enamelled corn-flowers, brilliant poppies, snow-white lily-bines, and light fragile hare-bells, mingled with tufts of the richest wheat-ears,—around its hat.

There was something in the tender youthfulness of these two innocent creatures, in the pretty, though somewhat fantastic, occupation of the girl, the fresh wild flowers, the ripe and swelling corn, that harmonised with the season and the hour, and conjured up memories of “Dis and Proserpine,” and of all that is gorgeous and graceful in old mythology,—of the lovely Lavinia of our own poet, and of that finest pastoral in the world, the far lovelier Ruth. But these fanciful associations soon vanished before the real sympathy excited by the actors of the scene, both of whom were known to me, and both objects of a sincere and lively interest.

The young girl, Dora Creswell, was the orphan niece of one of the wealthiest yeomen in our part of the world, the only child of his only brother ; and, having lost both her parents whilst still an infant, had been reared by her widowed uncle, as fondly and carefully as his own son, Walter. He said, that he loved her quite as well, perhaps he loved her better ; for, although it were impossible for a father not to be proud of the bold, handsome youth, who

at eighteen had a man's strength and a man's stature, was the best ringer, the best cricketer, and the best shot in the county, yet the fairy Dora, who, nearly ten years younger, was at once his handmaid, his house-keeper, his plaything, and his companion, was evidently the very apple of his eye. Our good farmer vaunted her accomplishments, as men of his class are wont to boast of a high-bred horse or a favourite greyhound. She could make a shirt and a pudding, darn stockings, rear poultry, keep accounts, and read the newspaper : was as famous for gooseberry wine as Mrs. Primrose, and could compound a syllabub with any dairy-woman in the county. There was not such a handy little creature any where ; so thoughtful and trusty about the house, and yet, out of doors, as gay as a lark, and as wild as the wind ;—nobody was like his Dora. So said, and so thought Farmer Creswell ; and, before Dora was ten years old, he had resolved that, in due time, she should marry his son, Walter, and had informed both parties of his intention.

Now, Farmer Creswell's intentions were well known to be as unchangeable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. He was a fair specimen of an English yeoman, a tall, square-built, muscular man, stout and active, with a resolute countenance, a keen eye, and an intelligent smile : his temper was boisterous and irascible, generous and kind to those whom he loved, but quick to take offence, and slow to pardon, expecting and exacting implicit

obedience from all about him. With all Dora's good gifts, the sweet and yielding nature of the gentle and submissive little girl was, undoubtedly, the chief cause of her uncle's partiality. Above all, he was obstinate in the very highest degree, had never been known to yield a point or change a resolution ; and the fault was the more inveterate because he called it firmness, and accounted it a virtue. For the rest, he was a person of excellent principle, and perfect integrity ; clear-headed, prudent, and sagacious ; fond of agricultural experiments, and pursuing them cautiously and successfully ; a good farmer, and a good man.

His son Walter, who was, in person, a handsome likeness of his father, resembled him also, in many points of character ; was equally obstinate, and far more fiery, hot, and bold. He loved his pretty cousin much as he would have loved a favourite sister, and might, very possibly, if let alone, have become attached to her as his father wished ; but to be dictated to, to be chained down to a distant engagement ; to hold himself bound to a mere child—the very idea was absurd—and restraining, with difficulty, an abrupt denial, he walked down into the village, predisposed, out of sheer contradiction, to fall in love with the first young woman who should come in his way,—and he did fall in love accordingly.

Mary Hay, the object of his ill-fated passion, was the daughter of the respectable mistress of a small endowed



school at the other side of the parish. She was a delicate, interesting creature, with a slight drooping figure, and a fair, downcast face like a snowdrop, forming such a contrast with her gay and gallant wooer, as Love, in his vagaries, is often pleased to bring together. The courtship was secret and tedious, and prolonged from months to years ; for Mary shrank from the painful contest which she knew that an avowal of their attachment would occasion. At length, her mother died, and, deprived of a home and maintenance, she reluctantly consented to a private marriage. An immediate discovery ensued, and was followed by all the evils, and more than all, that her worst fears had anticipated. Her husband was turned from the house of his father, and, in less than three months, his death, by an inflammatory fever, left her a desolate and pennyless widow ; unowned and unassisted by the stern parent, on whose unrelenting temper, neither the death of his son, nor the birth of his grandson, seemed to make the slightest impression. But for the general sympathy excited by the deplorable situation, and blameless deportment, of the widowed bride, she and her infant must have taken refuge in the workhouse. The whole neighbourhood was zealous to relieve and to serve them ; but their most liberal benefactress, their most devoted friend, was poor Dora. Considering her uncle's partiality to herself as the primary cause of all this misery, she felt like a guilty creature ; and casting off, at once, her

native timidity and habitual submission, she had repeatedly braved his anger, by the most earnest supplications for mercy, and for pardon ; and when this proved unavailing, she tried to mitigate their distresses by all the assistance that her small means would admit. Every shilling of her pocket-money she expended on her dear cousins ; worked for them, begged for them, and transferred to them every present that was made to herself, from a silk frock to a penny tartlet. Everything that was her own she gave, but nothing of her uncle's ; for, though sorely tempted to transfer some of the plenty around her, to those whose claim seemed so just, and whose need was so urgent, Dora felt that she was trusted, and that she must prove herself trustworthy.

Such was the posture of affairs, at the time of my encounter with Dora and little Walter, in the Harvest Field : the rest will be best told in the course of our dialogue :—

“ And so, Madam, I cannot bear to see my dear cousin Mary so sick and so melancholy ; and the dear, dear child, that a king might be proud of—only look at him ! ” exclaimed Dora, interrupting herself, as the beautiful child, sitting on the ground, in all the placid dignity of infancy, looked up at me, and smiled in my face.—“ Only look at him ! ” continued she, “ and think of that dear boy, and his dear mother, living on charity, and they my uncle's lawful heirs, whilst I, that have no right whatsoever, no

claim, none at all, I that, compared to them, am but a far-off kinswoman, the mere creature of his bounty, should revel in comfort and in plenty, and they starving ! I cannot bear it, and I will not. And then the wrong that he is doing himself ; he that is really so good and kind, to be called a hard-hearted tyrant by the whole country side. And he is unhappy himself, too ; I know that he is. So tired as he comes home, he will walk about his room half the night ; and often, at meal times, he will drop his knife and fork, and sigh so heavily. He may turn me out of doors, as he threatened ; or, what is worse, call me ungrateful or undutiful, but he shall see this boy."

"He never has seen him, then ? and that is why you are tricking him out so prettily ?"

"Yes, Ma'am. Mind what I told you, Walter ; and hold up your hat, and say what I bid you."

"Gan-papa's fowers !" stammered the pretty boy, in his sweet childish voice, the first words that I had ever heard him speak.

"Grand-papa's flowers !" said his zealous preceptress.

"Gan-papa's fowers !" echoed the boy.

"Shall you take the child to the house, Dora ?" asked I.

"No, Ma'am ; I look for my uncle here, every minute ; and this is the best place to ask a favour in, for the very sight of the great crop puts him in good humour ; not so much on account of the profits, but because the land never

bore half so much before, and it's all owing to his management in dressing and drilling. I came reaping here to-day on purpose to please him ; for though he says he does not wish me to work in the fields, I know he likes it ; and here he shall see little Walter. Do you think he can resist him, Ma'am ? ” continued Dora, leaning over her infant cousin, with the grace and fondness of a young Madonna ; “ do you think he can resist him, poor child, so helpless, so harmless ; his own blood too, and so like his father ? No heart could be hard enough to hold out, and I am sure that his will not. Only,”—pursued Dora, relapsing into her girlish tone and attitude, as a cold fear crossed her enthusiastic hope—“ only I'm half afraid that Walter will cry. It's strange, when one wants any thing to behave particularly well, how sure it is to be naughty ; my pets, especially.—I remember when my Lady Countess came on purpose to see our white peacock, that we got in a present from India, the obstinate bird ran away behind a bean-stack, and would not spread his train, to shew the dead white spots on his glossy white feathers, all we could do. Her ladyship was quite angry. And my red and yellow Marvel of Peru, which used to blow at four in the afternoon, as regular as the clock struck, was not open at five, the other day, when dear Miss Julia came to paint it, though the sun was shining as bright as it does now. If Walter should scream and cry, for my uncle does sometimes look so stern ;—and then it 's Saturday, and he has

such a beard ! If the child should be frightened !—Be sure, Walter, that you don't cry ! ” said Dora, in great alarm.

“ Gan-papa's fowers ! ” replied the smiling boy, holding up his hat ; and his young protectress was comforted.

At this moment, the farmer was heard whistling to his dog, in a neighbouring field ; and, fearful that my presence might injure the cause, I departed, my thoughts full of the noble little girl and her generous purpose.

I had promised to call the next afternoon, to learn her success ; and, passing the harvest-field in my way, found a group assembled there which instantly dissipated my anxiety. On the very spot where we had parted, I saw the good farmer himself, in his Sunday clothes, tossing little Walter in the air ; the child laughing and screaming with delight, and his grandfather apparently quite as much delighted as himself ; a pale, slender young woman, in deep mourning, stood looking at their gambols, with an air of intense thankfulness ; and Dora, the cause and the sharer of all this happiness, was loitering behind, playing with the flowers in Walter's hat, which she was holding in her hand.—Catching my eye, the sweet girl came to me instantly.

“ I see how it is, my dear Dora, and I give you joy, from the bottom of my heart. Little Walter behaved well, then ? ”

“ Oh, he behaved like an angel ! ”



“ Did he say Gan-papa’s fowers ? ”

“ Nobody spoke a word. The moment the child took off his hat and looked up, the truth seemed to flash on my uncle, and to melt his heart at once ; the boy is so like his father. He knew him instantly, and caught him up in his arms and hugged him, just as he is hugging him now.”

“ And the beard, Dora ? ”

“ Why, that seemed to take the child’s fancy : he put up his little hands and stroked it ; and laughed in his grand-father’s face, and flung his chubby arms round his neck, and held out his sweet mouth to be kissed ;—and oh ! how my uncle did kiss him ! I thought he would never have done ; and then he sat down on a wheat-sheaf, and cried ; and I cried, too. Very strange, that one should cry for happiness ! ” added Dora, as some large drops fell on the rustic wreath which she was adjusting round Walter’s hat : “ Very strange,” repeated she, looking up, with a bright smile, and brushing away the tears from her rosy cheeks, with a bunch of corn-flowers—“ very strange, that I should cry, when I am the happiest creature alive ; for Mary and Walter are to live with us ; and my dear uncle, instead of being angry with me, says that he loves me better than ever. How very strange it is,” said Dora, as the tears poured down, faster and faster, “ that I should be so foolish as to cry ! ”



## THE INCENDIARY



## THE INCENDIARY

No one that had the misfortune to reside during the last winter in the disturbed districts of the south of England, will ever forget the awful impression of that terrible time. The stilly gatherings of the misguided peasantry amongst the wild hills, partly heath and partly woodland, of which so much of the northern part of Hampshire is composed, —dropping in one by one, and two by two, in the gloom of evening, or the dim twilight of a November morning ; or the open and noisy meetings of determined men at noontide in the streets and greens of our Berkshire villages, and even sometimes in the very churchyards, sallying forth in small but resolute numbers to collect money or destroy machinery, and compelling or persuading their fellow-labourers to join them at every farm they visited ; or the sudden appearance and disappearance of these large bodies, who sometimes remained together to the amount of several hundreds for many days, and sometimes dispersed, one scarcely knew how, in a few hours ; their day-light marches on the high road, regular and orderly as those of an army, or their midnight visits to lonely houses,



lawless and terrific as the descent of pirates, or the incursions of banditti ;—all brought close to us a state of things which we never thought to have witnessed in peaceful and happy England. In the sister island, indeed, we had read of such horrors, but now they were brought home to our very household hearths ; we tasted of fear, the bitterest cup that an imaginative woman can taste, in all its agonising varieties ; and felt, by sad experience, the tremendous difference between that distant report of danger, with which we had so often fancied that we sympathised, and the actual presence of danger itself. Such events are salutary, inasmuch as they shew to the human heart its own desperate self-deceit. I could not but smile at the many pretty letters of condolence and fellow-feeling which I received from writers who wrote far too well to feel anything, who most evidently felt nothing ; but the smile was a melancholy one—for I recollected how often, not intending to feign, or suspecting that I was feigning, I myself had written such.

Nor were the preparations for defence, however necessary, less shocking than the apprehensions of attack. The hourly visits of bustling parish officers, bristling with importance (for our village, though in the centre of the insurgents, continued uncontaminated—“ faithful amidst the unfaithful found ”—and was therefore quite a rallying point for loyal men and true) ; the swearing in of whole regiments of petty constables ; the stationary watchmen,

who every hour, to prove their vigilance, sent in some poor wretch, beggar, or match-seller, or rambling child, under the denomination of suspicious persons ; the mounted patrol, whose deep " all's well," which ought to have been consolatory, was about the most alarming of all alarming sounds ; the soldiers, transported from place to place in carts the better to catch the rogues, whose local knowledge gave them great advantage in a dispersal ; the grave processions of magistrates and gentlemen on horse-back ; and, above all, the nightly collecting of arms and armed men within one's own dwelling, kept up a continual sense of nervous inquietude.

Fearful, however, as were the realities, the rumours were a hundred-fold more alarming. Not an hour passed but, from some quarter or other, reports came pouring in of mobs gathering, mobs assembled, mobs marching upon us. Now the high-roads were blockaded by the rioters, travellers murdered, soldiers defeated, and the magistrates, who had gone out to meet and harangue them, themselves surrounded and taken by the desperate multitude. Now the artizans—the commons, so to say of B.—had risen to join the peasantry, driving out the gentry and tradespeople whilst they took possession of their houses and property, and only detaining the mayor and aldermen as hostages. Now that illustrious town held loyal, but was besieged. Now the mob had carried the place ; and artizans, constables, tradespeople, soldiers,

and magistrates, the mayor and corporation included, were murdered to a man, to say nothing of women and children ; the market-place running with blood, and the town hall piled with dead bodies. This last rumour, which was much to the taste of our villagers, actually prevailed for several hours, terrified maid servants ran shrieking about the house, and every corner of the village street realised Shakespeare's picture of " a smith swallowing a tailor's news."

So passed the short winter's day. With the approach of night came fresh sorrows ; the red glow of fires gleaming on the horizon, and mounting into the middle sky ; the tolling of bells ; and the rumbling sound of the engines clattering along from place to place, and often, too often rendered useless by the cutting of the pipes after they had begun to play—a dreadful aggravation of the calamity, since it proved that among those who assembled, professedly to help, were to be found favourers and abettors of the concealed incendiaries. Oh the horror of those fires—breaking forth night after night, sudden, yet expected, always seeming nearer than they actually were, and always said to have been more mischievous to life and property than they actually had been ! Mischievous enough they were, Heaven knows ! A terrible and unholy abuse of the most beautiful and comfortable of the elements!—a sinful destruction of the bounties of Providence!—an awful crime against God and man !

Shocking it was to behold the peasantry of England becoming familiarised with this tremendous power of evil—this desperate, yet most cowardly sin !

The blow seemed to fall, too, just where it might least have been looked for,—on the unoffending, the charitable, the kind ; on those who were known only as the labourer's friends ; to impoverish whom was to take succour, assistance, and protection from the poor. One of the objects of attack in our own immediate neighbourhood was a widow lady, between eighty and ninety ; the best of the good, the kindest of the kind. Occurrences like this were in every way dreadful. They made us fear (and such fear is a revengeful passion, and comes near to hate) the larger half of our species. They weakened our faith in human nature.

The revulsion was, however, close at hand. A time came which changed the current of our feelings—a time of retribution. The fires were quenched ; the riots were put down ; the chief of the rioters were taken. Examination and commitment were the order of the day ; the crowded gaols groaned with their overload of wretched prisoners ; soldiers were posted at every avenue to guard against possible escape ; and every door was watched night and day by miserable women, the wives, mothers, or daughters of the culprits praying for admission to their unfortunate relatives. The danger was fairly over, and pity had succeeded to fear.

Then, above all, came the special commission : the judges in threefold dignity ; the array of counsel ; the crowded court ; the solemn trial ; the awful sentence ; —all the more impressive, from the merciful feeling which pervaded the government, the counsel, and the court. My father, a very old magistrate, being chairman of the Bench, as well as one of the Grand Jury ; and the then High Sheriff, with whom it is every way an honour to claim acquaintance, being his intimate friend ; I saw and knew more of the proceedings of this stirring time than usually falls to the lot of women, and took a deep interest in proceedings which had in them a thrilling excitement as far beyond acted tragedy as truth is beyond fiction.

I shall never forget the hushed silence of the auditors, a dense mass of human bodies, the heads only visible, ranged tier over tier to the very ceiling of the lofty hall ; the rare and striking importance which that silence and the awfulness of the occasion gave to the mere official forms of a court of justice, generally so hastily slurred over and slightly attended to ; the unusual seriousness of the Counsel ; the watchful gravity of the Judges ; and, more than all, the appearance of the prisoners themselves, belonging mostly to the younger classes of the peasantry, such men as one is accustomed to see in the fields, on the road or the cricket-ground with sunburnt faces, and a total absence of reflection or care, but who now, under



the influence of a sharp and bitter anxiety, had acquired not only the sallow paleness proper to a prison, but the look of suffering and of thought, the brows contracted and brought low over the eyes, the general sharpness of feature and elongation of countenance, which give an expression of intellect, a certain momentary elevation, even to the commonest and most vacant of human faces. Such is the power of an absorbing passion, a great and engrossing grief. One man only amongst the large number whom I heard arraigned (for they were brought out by tens and by twenties) would, perhaps, under other circumstances, have been accounted handsome; yet a painter would at that moment have found studies in many.

I shall never forget, either, the impression made on my mind by one of the witnesses. Several men had been arraigned together for machine-breaking. All but one of them had employed counsel for their defence, and under their direction had called witnesses to character, the most respectable whom they could find—the clergy and overseers of their respective parishes, for example,—masters with whom they had lived, neighbouring farmers or gentry, or even magistrates,—all that they could muster to grace or credit their cause. One poor man alone had retained no counsel, offered no defence, called no witness, though the evidence against him was by no means so strong as that against his fellow-prisoners; and it was clear that his was

exactly the case in which testimony to character would be of much avail. The defences had ended, and the judge was beginning to sum up, when suddenly a tall gaunt upright figure, with a calm thoughtful brow, and a determined but most respectful demeanour, appeared in the witnesses' box. He was drest in a smock frock, and was clean and respectable in appearance, but evidently poor. The judge interrupted himself in his charge to enquire the man's business ; and hearing that he was a voluntary witness for the undefended prisoner, proceeded to question him, when the following dialogue took place. The witness's replies, which seemed to me then, and still do so, very striking from their directness and manliness, were delivered with the same humble boldness of tone and manner that characterised the words.

*Judge.* " You are a witness for the prisoner, an unsummoned witness ? "

" I am, my lord. I heard that he was to be tried to-day, and have walked twenty miles to speak the truth of him, as one poor man may do of another."

" What is your situation in life ? "

" A labourer, my lord ; nothing but a day-labourer."

" How long have you known the prisoner ? "

" As long as I have known any thing. We were play-mates together, went to the same school, have lived in the same parish. I have known him all my life."

" And what character has he borne ? "

“As good a character, my lord, as a man need work under.”

It is pleasant to add, that this poor man's humble testimony was read from the judge's notes, and mentioned in the judge's charge, with full as much respect, perhaps a little more, than the evidence of clergymen and magistrates for the rest of the accused ; and that principally from this direct and simple tribute to his character, the prisoner in question was acquitted.

To return, however, from my evil habit of digressing (if I may use an Irish phrase) before I begin, and making my introduction longer than my story, a simple sin to which in many instances, and especially in this, I am fain to plead guilty ;—to come back to my title and my subject,—I must inform my courteous readers, that the case of arson, which attracted most attention and excited most interest in this part of the country, was the conflagration of certain ricks, barns, and farm-buildings, in the occupation of Richard Mayne ; and that, not so much from the value of the property consumed (though that value was considerable), as on account of the character and situation of the prisoner, whom, after a long examination, the magistrates found themselves compelled to commit for the offence. I did not hear this trial, the affair having occurred in the neighbouring county ; and do not, therefore, vouch for “ the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,” as one does when an ear-

witness ; but the general outline of the story will suffice for our purpose.

Richard Mayne was a wealthy yeoman of the old school, sturdy, boisterous, bold, and kind, always generous, and generally good-natured, but cross-grained and obstinate by fits, and sometimes purse-proud—after the fashion of men who have made money by their own industry and shrewdness. He had married late in life, and above him in station, and had now been for two or three years a widower with one only daughter, a girl of nineteen, of whom he was almost as fond as of his greyhound Mayfly, and for pretty much the same reason—that both were beautiful and gentle, and his own, and both admired and coveted by others—that Mayfly had won three cups, and that Lucy had refused four offers.

A sweet and graceful creature was Lucy Mayne. Her mother, a refined and cultivated woman, the daughter of an unbeneficed clergyman, had communicated, perhaps unconsciously, much of her own taste to her daughter. It is true, that most young ladies, even of her own station, would have looked with great contempt on Lucy's acquirements, who neither played nor drew, and was wholly, in the phrase of the day, unaccomplished ; but then she read Shakespeare and Milton, and the poets and prose writers of the James's and Charles's times, with a perception and relish of their beauty very uncommon in a damsel under twenty ; and when her father boasted

of his Lucy as the cleverest as well as the prettiest lass within ten miles, he was not so far wrong as many of his hearers were apt to think him.

After all, the person to whom Lucy's education owed most, was a relation of her mother's, a poor relation, who, being left a widow with two children almost totally destitute, was permitted by Richard Mayne to occupy one end of a small farm-house, about a mile from the old substantial manorial residence which he himself inhabited, whilst he farmed the land belonging to both. Nothing could exceed his kindness to the widow and her family ; and Mrs. Owen, a delicate and broken-spirited woman who had known better days, and was now left with a sickly daughter and a promising son dependant on the precarious charity of relatives and friends, found in the free-handed and open-hearted farmer and his charming little girl her only comfort. He even restored to her the blessing of her son's society, who had hitherto earned his living by writing for an attorney in the neighbouring town, but whom her wealthy kinsman now brought home to her, and established as the present assistant and future successor of the master of a well-endowed grammar-school in the parish, farmer Mayne being one of the trustees, and all-powerful with the other functionaries joined in the trust, and the then schoolmaster in so wretched a state of health as almost to ensure a speedy vacancy.



In most instances, such an exertion of an assumed rather than a legitimate authority, would have occasioned no small prejudice against the party protected ; but George Owen was not to be made unpopular, even by the unpopularity of his patron. Gentle, amiable, true, and kind,—kind both in word and deed,—it was found absolutely impossible to dislike him. He was clever, too, very clever, with a remarkable aptitude for teaching, as both parents and boys soon found to their mutual satisfaction ; for the progress of one half-year of his instruction equalled that made in a twelvemonth under the old regime. He must also, one should think, have been fond of teaching, for after a hard day's fagging at Latin and English, and writing and accounts, and all the drudgery of a boy's school, he would make a circuit of a mile and a half home in order to give Lucy Mayne a lesson in French or Italian. For a certainty, George Owen must have had a strong natural turn for playing the pedagogue, or he never would have gone so far out of his way just to read Fénelon and Alfieri with Lucy Mayne.

So for two happy years matters continued. At the expiration of that time, just as the old schoolmaster, who declared that nothing but George's attention had kept him alive so long, was evidently on his death-bed, farmer Mayne suddenly turned Mrs. Owen, her son, and her sick daughter out of the house, which by his permission they had hitherto occupied ; and declared publicly, that

whilst he held an acre of land in the parish, George Owen should never be elected master of the grammar-school—a threat which there was no doubt of his being able to carry into effect. The young man, however, stood his ground; and sending off his mother and sister to an uncle in Wales, who had lately written kindly to them, hired a room at a cottage in the village, determined to try the event of an election, which the languishing state of the incumbent rendered inevitable.

The cause of farmer Mayne's inveterate dislike to one whom he had so warmly protected, and whose conduct, manners, and temper had procured him friends wherever he was known, nobody could assign with any certainty. Perhaps he had unwittingly trodden on Mayfly's toe, or on a prejudice of her master's—but his general carefulness not to hurt any thing, or offend anybody, rendered either of these conjectures equally impossible;—perhaps he had been found only too amiable by the farmer's other pet—those lessons in languages were dangerous things!—and when Lucy was seen at church with a pale face and red eyes, and when his landlord Squire Hawkins's blood hunter was seen every day at farmer Mayne's door, it became currently reported and confidently believed that the cause of the quarrel was a love affair between the cousins, which the farmer was determined to break off, in order to bestow his daughter on the young lord of the manor.

Affairs had been in this posture for about a fortnight, and the old schoolmaster was just dead, when a fire broke out in the rick-yard of Farley Court, and George Owen was apprehended and committed as the incendiary ! The astonishment of the neighbourhood was excessive ; the Rector and half the farmers of the place offered to become bail ; but the offence was not bailable ; and the only consolation left for the friends of the unhappy young man, was the knowledge that the trial would speedily come on, and their internal conviction that an acquittal was certain.

As time wore on, however, their confidence diminished. The evidence against him was terribly strong. He had been observed lurking about the rick-yard with a lanthorn, in which a light was burning, by a lad in the employ of farmer Mayne, who had gone thither for hay to fodder his cattle about an hour before the fire broke out. At eleven o'clock the hay-stack was on fire, and at ten Robert Doyle had mentioned to James White, another boy in farmer Mayne's service, that he had seen Mr. George Owen behind the great rick. Farmer Mayne himself had met him at half-past ten (as he was returning from B. market) in the lane leading from the rick-yard towards the village, and had observed him throw something he held in his hand into the ditch. Hepton Harris, a constable employed to seek for evidence, had found the next morning a lanthorn, answering to that described by Robert Doyle, in the part

of the ditch indicated by farmer Mayne, which Thomas Brown, the village shopkeeper, in whose house Owen slept, identified as having lent to his lodger in the early part of the evening. A silver pencil, given to Owen by the mother of one of his pupils, and bearing his full name on the seal at the end, was found close to where the fire was discovered ; and to crown all, the Curate of the village, with whom the young man's talents and character had rendered him a deserved favourite, had unwillingly deposed that he had said " it might be in his power to take a great revenge on farmer Mayne," or words to that effect ; whilst a letter was produced from the accused to the farmer himself, intimating that one day he would be sorry for the oppression which he had exercised towards him and his. These two last facts were much relied upon as evincing malice, and implying a purpose of revenge from the accused towards the prosecutor ; yet there were many who thought that the previous circumstances might well account for them without reference to the present occurrence, and that the conflagration of the ricks and farm-buildings might, under the spirit of the time (for fires were raging every night in the surrounding villages), be merely a remarkable coincidence. The young man himself simply denied the fact of setting fire to any part of the property or premises ; enquired earnestly whether any lives had been lost, and still more earnestly after the health of Miss Lucy ; and on finding that she had been confined

to her bed by fever and delirium, occasioned, as was supposed, by the fright, ever since that unhappy occurrence, relapsed into a gloomy silence, and seemed to feel no concern or interest in the issue of the trial.

His friends, nevertheless, took kind and zealous measures for his defence,—engaged counsel, sifted testimony, and used every possible means, in the assurance of his innocence, to trace out the true incendiary. Nothing, however, could be discovered to weaken the strong chain of circumstantial evidence, or to impeach the credit of the witnesses, who, with the exception of the farmer himself, seemed all friendly to the accused, and most distressed at being obliged to bear testimony against him. On the eve of the trial the most zealous of his friends could find no ground of hope except in the chances of the day; Lucy, for whom alone the prisoner asked, being still confined by severe illness.

The judges arrived, the whole terrible array of the special commission; the introductory ceremonies were gone through; the cause was called on, and the case proceeded with little or no deviation from the evidence already cited. When called upon for his defence, the prisoner again asked if Lucy Mayne were in court? and hearing that she was ill in her father's house, declined entering into any defence whatsoever. Witnesses to character, however, pressed forward—his old master, the attorney, the rector and curate of the parish, half the



farmers of the village, everybody, in short, who ever had an opportunity of knowing him, even his reputed rival, Mr. Hawkins, who, speaking, he said, on the authority of one who knew him well, professed himself confident that he could not be guilty of a bad action—a piece of testimony that seemed to strike and affect the prisoner more than any thing that had passed ;—evidence to character crowded into court ;—but all was of no avail against the strong chain of concurrent facts ; and the judge was preparing to sum up, and the jury looking as if they had condemned, when suddenly a piercing shriek was heard in the Court, and, pale, tottering, disheveled, Lucy Mayne rushed into her father's arms, and cried out with a shrill despairing voice, that “ she was the only guilty ; that she had set fire to the rick ; and that if they killed George Owen for the crime, they would be guilty of murder.”

The general consternation may be imagined, especially that of the farmer, who had left his daughter almost insensible with illness, and still thought her light-headed. Medical assistance, however, was immediately summoned, and it then appeared that what she said was most true ; that the lovers, for such they were, had been accustomed to deposit letters in one corner of that unlucky hay-rick ; that having seen from her chamber window George Owen leaving the yard, she had flown with a taper in her hand to secure the expected letter, and, alarmed at her father's voice, had run away so hastily, that she had, as she now

remembered, left the lighted taper amidst the hay ; that then the fire came, and all was a blank to her, until, recovering that morning from the stupor succeeding to delirium, she had heard that George Owen was to be tried for his life for the effect of her carelessness, and had flown to save him she knew not how !

The sequel may be guessed : George was of course acquitted : every body, even the very judge, pleaded for the lovers ; the young landlord and generous rival added his good word ; and the schoolmaster of Farley and his pretty wife are at this moment one of the best and happiest couples in his majesty's dominions.

## THE WILL

THE END

## THE WILL

NOTHING in the whole routine of country life seems to me more capricious and unaccountable than the choice of a county beauty. Every shire in the kingdom, from Brobdignagian York to Lilliputian Rutland, can boast of one. The existence of such a personage seems as essential to the well-being of a provincial community as that of the queen-bee in a hive ; and, except by some rare accident, when two fair sisters for instance of nearly equal pretensions appear in similar dresses at the same balls and the same archery meetings, you as seldom see two queens of Brentford in the one society as the other. Both are elective monarchies, and both tolerably despotic ; but so far I must say for the little winged people that one comprehends the impulse which guides them in the choice of a sovereign far better than the motives which influence their brother-insects, the beaux ; and the reason of this superior sagacity in the lesser swarms is obvious. With them the election rests in a natural instinct, an unerring sense of fitness, which never fails to discover with admirable discrimination the one only she who suits their



purpose ; whilst the other set of voluntary subjects, the plumeless bipeds, are unluckily abandoned to their own wild will, and, although from long habits of imitation almost as unanimous as the bees, seem guided in their admiration by the merest caprice, the veriest chance, and select their goddess, the goddess of beauty, blindfold—as the Bluecoat boys draw, or used to draw, the tickets in a lottery.

Nothing is so difficult to define as the customary qualification of the belle of a country assembly. Face or person it certainly is not ; for take a stranger into the room, and it is at least two to one but he will fix on twenty damsels prettier than the county queen ; nor, to do the young gentlemen justice, is it fortune or connexion ; for, so as the lady come within the prescribed limits of county gentility, (which, by the way, are sufficiently arbitrary and exclusive) nothing more is required in a beauty—whatever might be expected in a wife ; fortune it is not, still less is it rank, and least of all accomplishments. In short, it seems to me equally difficult to define what is the requisite and what is not ; for, on looking back through twenty years to the successive belles of the B——shire balls, I cannot fix on any one definite qualification. One damsel seemed to me chosen for gaiety and good-humour, a merry, laughing girl ; another for haughtiness and airs ; one because her father was hospitable, another because her mother was pleasant ;

one became fashionable because related to a fashionable poet, whilst another stood on her own independent merits as one of the boldest riders in the hunt, and earned her popularity at night by her exploits in the morning.

Among the whole list, the one who commanded the most universal admiration, and seemed to me to approach nearest to the common notion of a pretty woman, was the high-born and graceful Constance Lisle. Besides being a tall, elegant figure, with finely chiselled features and a pale but delicate complexion, relieved by large dark eyes full of sensibility, and a profusion of glossy, black hair, her whole air and person were eminently distinguished by that undefinable look of fashion and high breeding, that indisputable stamp of superiority, which, for want of a better word, we are content to call style. Her manners were in admirable keeping with her appearance. Gentle, gracious, and self-possessed, courteous to all and courting none, she received the flattery to which she had been accustomed from her cradle as mere words of course, and stimulated the ardour of her admirers by her calm non-notice infinitely more than a finished coquette would have done by all the *agaceries* of the most consummate vanity.

Nothing is commoner than the affectation of indifference. But the indifference of Miss Lisle was so obviously genuine, that the most superficial coxcomb that buzzed around her could hardly suspect its reality. She heeded

admiration no more than that queen of the garden, the lady lily, whom she so much resembled in modest dignity. It played around her as the sunny air of June around the snow-white flower, her common and natural atmosphere.

This was perhaps one reason for the number of beaux who fluttered round Constance. It puzzled and piqued them. They were unused to be of so little consequence to a young lady, and could not make it out. Another cause might perhaps be found in the splendid fortune which she inherited from her mother, and which, even independently of her expectations from her father, rendered her the greatest match and richest heiress in the county.

Richard Lisle, her father, a second son of the ancient family of Lisle of Lisle-End, had been one of those men born, as it seems, to fortune, with whom every undertaking prospers through a busy life. Of an ardent and enterprising temper, at once impetuous and obstinate, he had mortally offended his father and elder brother by refusing to take orders and to accept in due season the family livings, which time out of mind had been the provision of the second sons of their illustrious house. Rejected by his relations, he had gone out as an adventurer to India, had been taken into favour by the head-partner of a great commercial house, married his daughter, entered the civil service of the Company, been resident

at the court of one native prince and governor of the forfeited territory of another, had accumulated wealth through all the various means by which in India money has been found to make money, and finally returned to England a widower, with an only daughter and one of the largest fortunes ever brought from the gorgeous East.

Very different had been the destiny of the family at home. Old Sir Rowland Lisle (for the name was to be found in one of the earliest pages of the Baronetage) an expensive, ostentatious man, proud of his old ancestry, of his old place, and of his old English hospitality, was exactly the man to involve any estate, however large its amount; and, when two contests for the county had brought in their train debt and mortgages, and he had recourse to horse-racing and hazard to deaden the sense of his previous imprudence, nobody was astonished to find him dying of grief and shame, a heart-broken and almost ruined man.

His eldest son, Sir Everard, was perfectly free from either of these destructive vices; but he, besides an abundant portion of irritability, obstinacy, and family pride, had one quality quite as fatal to the chance of redeeming his embarrassed fortunes as the electioneering and gambling propensities of his father—to wit, a love of litigation so strong and predominant that it assumed the form of a passion.

He plunged instantly into law-suits with creditor and

neighbour, and, in despite of the successive remonstrances of his wife, a high-born and gentle-spirited woman, who died a few years after their marriage, of his daughter, a strong-minded girl, who, moderately provided for by a female relation, married at eighteen a respectable clergyman, and of his son, a young man of remarkable promise still at college, he had contrived, by the time his brother returned from India, not only to mortgage nearly the whole of his estate but to get into dispute or litigation with almost every gentleman for ten miles round.

The arrival of the governor afforded some ground of hope to the few remaining friends of the family. He was known to be a man of sense and probity, and by no means deficient in pride after his own fashion ; and no one doubted but a reconciliation would take place, and a part of the nabob's rupees he applied to the restoration of the fallen glories of Lisle-End. With that object in view, a distant relation contrived to produce a seemingly accidental interview at his own house between the two brothers, who had had no sort of intercourse, except an interchange of cold letters on their father's death, since the hour of their separation.

Never was mediation more completely unsuccessful. They met as cold and reluctant friends ; they parted as confirmed and bitter enemies. Both, of course, were to blame, and equally of course each laid the blame on



the other. Perhaps the governor's intentions might be the kindest. Undoubtedly his manner was the worst : for, scolding, haranguing, and laying down the law, as he had been accustomed to do in India, he at once offered to send his nephew abroad with the certainty of accumulating an ample fortune, and to relieve his brother's estate from mortgage, and allow him a handsome income on the small condition of taking possession himself of the family mansion and the family property—a proposal coldly and stiffly refused by the elder brother, who, without deigning to notice the second proposition, declined his son's entering into the service of a commercial company, much in the spirit and almost in the words of Rob Roy, when the good Baillie Nicol Jarvie proposed to apprentice his hopeful offspring to the mechanical occupation of a weaver. The real misfortune of the interview was that the parties were too much alike, both proud, both irritable, both obstinate, and both too much accustomed to deal with their inferiors.

The negotiation failed completely ; but the governor, clinging to his native place with a mixed feeling compounded of love for the spot and hatred to its proprietor, purchased at an exorbitant price an estate close at hand, built a villa, and laid out grounds with the usual magnificence of an Indian, bought every acre of land that came under sale for miles around, was shrewdly suspected of having secured some of Sir Everard's numerous mort-

gages, and in short proceeded to invest Lisle-End just as formally as the besieging army sat down before the citadel of Antwerp. He spared no pains to annoy his enemy ; defended all the actions brought by his brother, the lord of many manors, against trespassers and poachers ; disputed his motions at the vestry ; quarrelled with his decisions on the bench ; turned Whig because Sir Everard was a Tory ; and set the whole parish and half the county by the ears by his incessant squabbles.

Amongst the gentry, his splendid hospitality, his charming daughter, and the exceeding unpopularity of his adversary, who at one time or other had been at law with nearly all of them, commanded many partizans. But the common people, frequently great sticklers for hereditary right, adhered for the most part to the cause of their landlord—ay, even those with whom he had been disputing all his life long. This might be partly ascribed to their universal love for the young 'Squire Henry, whose influence among the poor fairly balanced that of Constance among the rich ; but the chief cause was certainly to be found in the character of the governor himself.

At first it seemed a fine thing to have obtained so powerful a champion in every little scrape. They found, however, and pretty quickly, that in gaining this new and magnificent protector they had also gained a master. Obedience was a necessary of life to our Indian, who,

although he talked about liberty and equality, and so forth, and looked on them abstractedly as excellent things, had no very exact practical idea of their operation, and claimed in England the same "awful rule and just supremacy" which he had exercised in the East. Every thing must bend to his sovereign will and pleasure, from the laws of cricket to the laws of the land; so that the sturdy farmers were beginning to grumble, and his *protégés*, the poachers, to rebel, when the sudden death of Sir Everard put an immediate stop to his operations and his enmity.

For the new Sir Henry, a young man beloved by every body, studious and thoughtful, but most amiably gentle and kind, his uncle had always entertained an involuntary respect, a respect due at once to his admirable conduct and his high-toned and interesting character. They knew each other by sight, but had never met until a few days after the funeral, when the governor repaired to Lisle-End in deep mourning, shook his nephew heartily by the hand, condoled with him on his loss, begged to know in what way he could be of service to him, and finally renewed the offer to send him out to India, with the same advantages that would have attended his own son, which he had previously made to Sir Everard. The young heir thanked him with a smile rather tender than glad, which gave its sweet expression to his countenance, sighed deeply, and

put into his hands a letter "which he had found," he said, "amongst his poor father's papers, and which must be taken for his answer to his uncle's generous and too tempting offers."

"You refuse me then?" asked the governor.

"Read that letter, and tell me if I can do otherwise. Only read that letter," resumed Sir Henry; and his uncle, curbing with some difficulty his natural impatience, opened and read the paper.

It was a letter from a dying father to a beloved son, conjuring him by the duty he had ever shown to obey his last injunction, and neither to sell, let, alienate, nor leave, Lisle-End; to preserve the estate entire and undiminished so long as the rent sufficed to pay the interest of the mortgages; and to live among his old tenantry in his own old halls so long as the ancient structure would yield him shelter. "Do this, my beloved son," pursued the letter, "and take your father's tenderest blessing; and believe that a higher blessing will follow on the sacrifice of interest, ambition, and worldly enterprise, to the will of a dying parent. You have obeyed my injunctions living—do not scorn them dead. Again and again I bless you, prime solace of a life of struggle, my dear, my dutiful, son!"

"Could I disobey?" enquired Sir Henry, as his uncle returned him the letter; "could it even be a question?"

“No!” replied the governor peevishly. “But to mew you up with the deer and the pheasants in this wild old park, to immure a fine, spirited lad in this huge old mansion along with family pictures and suits of armour, and all for a whim, a crotchet, which can answer no purpose upon earth—it’s enough to drive a man mad!”

“It will not be for long,” returned Sir Henry, gently. “Short as it is, my race is almost run. And then, thanks to the unbroken entail—the entail which I never could prevail to have broken, when it might have spared *him* so much misery—the park, mansion, estate, even the armour and the family pictures, will pass into much better hands—into yours. And Lisle-End will once more flourish in splendour and in hospitality.”

The young baronet smiled as he said this; but the governor, looking on his tall, slender figure and pallid cheek, felt that it was likely to be true, and, wringing his hand in silence, was about to depart, when Sir Henry begged him to remain a moment longer.

“I have still one favour to beg of you, my dear uncle—one favour which I may beg. When last I saw Miss Lisle at the house of my sister Mrs. Beauchamp (for I have twice accidentally had the happiness to meet her there) she expressed a wish that you had such a piece of water in your grounds as that at the east end of the park, which luckily adjoins your demesne. She would



like, she said, a pleasure-vessel on that pretty lake. Now I may not sell, or let, or alienate—but surely I may lend. And, if you will accept this key, and she will deign to use as her own the Lisle-End mere, I need not, I trust, say how sacred from all intrusion from me or mine the spot would prove, or how honoured I should feel myself if it could contribute, however slightly, to her pleasure. Will you tell her this ? ”

“ You had better come and tell her yourself.”

“ No ! Oh no ! ”

“ Well, then, I suppose I must.”

And the governor went slowly home whistling, not for “ want of thought,” but as a frequent custom of his when any thing vexed him.

About a month after this conversation, the father and daughter were walking through a narrow piece of woodland, which divided the highly ornamented gardens of the governor, with their miles of gravel walks and acres of American borders, from the magnificent park of Lisle-End. The scene was beautiful, and the weather, a sunny day in early May, shewed the landscape to an advantage belonging, perhaps, to no other season : on the one hand, the gorgeous shrubs, trees, and young plantations, of the new place, the larch in its tenderest green, lilacs, laburnums, and horse-chestnuts, in their flowery glory, and the villa, with its irregular and oriental architecture, rising above all ; on the other, the magni-

ficient oaks and beeches of the park, now stretching into avenues, now clumped on its swelling lawns (for the ground was remarkable for its inequality of surface) now reflected in the clear water of the lake, into which the woods sometimes advanced in mimic promontories, receding again into tiny bays, by the side of which the dappled deer lay in herds beneath the old thorns ; whilst, on an eminence, at a considerable distance, the mansion, a magnificent structure of Elizabeth's day, with its gable-ends and clustered chimneys, stood silent and majestic as a pyramid in the desert. The spot on which they stood had a character of extraordinary beauty, and yet different from either scene. It was a wild glen, through which an irregular footpath led to the small gate in the park, of which Sir Henry had sent Constance the key, the shelving banks on either side clothed with furze in the fullest blossom, which scented the air with its rich fragrance, and would almost have dazzled the eye with its golden lustre but for a few scattered firs and hollies, and some straggling clumps of the feathery birch. The nightingales were singing around, the wood-pigeons cooing overhead, and the father and daughter passed slowly and silently along, as if engrossed by the sweetness of the morning and the loveliness of the scene.

They were thinking of nothing less ; as was proved by the first question of the governor, who, always impatient of any pause in conversation, demanded of his

daughter "what answer he was to return to the offer of Lord Fitzallan."

"A courteous refusal, my dear father, if you please," answered Constance.

"But I do not please," replied her father, with his crossest whistle. "Here you say No! and No! and No! to every body, instead of marrying some one or other of these young men who flock round you, and giving me the comfort of seeing a family of grandchildren about me in my old age. 'No' to this lord! and 'No' to that! I verily believe, Constance, that you mean to die an old maid."

"I do not expect to live to be an old maid," sighed Constance; "but nothing is so unlikely as my marrying."

"Whew!" ejaculated the governor. "So she means to die as well as her cousin! What has put that notion in your head, Constance? Are you ill?"

"Not particularly," replied the daughter. "But yet I am persuaded that my life will be a short one. And so, my dear father, as you told me the other day that now that I am of age I ought to make my will, I have just been following your advice."

"Oh! that accounts for your thinking of dying. Every body after first making a will expects not to survive above a week or two. I did not myself, I remember, some forty years ago, when, having scraped a few hundreds together, I thought it a duty to leave them to

somebody. But I got used to the operation as I became richer and older. Well, Constance! you have a pretty little fortune to bequeath—about three hundred thousand pounds, as I take it. What have you done with your money?—not left it to me, I hope?”

“No, dear father, you desired me not.”

“That’s right. But whom have you made your heir? Your maid, Nannette? or your lap-dog, Bijou?—they are your prime pets—or the County Hospital? or the Literary Fund? or the National Gallery? or the British Museum?—eh, Constance?”

“None of these, dear father. I have left my property where it will certainly be useful, and I think well used—to my cousin Henry of Lisle-End.”

“Your cousin Henry of Lisle-End!” re-echoed the father, smiling. “So, so! Her cousin Henry!”

“But keep my secret, I conjure you, dear father!” pursued Constance, eagerly.

“Her cousin Henry!” said the governor to himself, sitting down on the side of the bank to calculate: “her cousin Henry! And she may be queen of Lisle-End, as this key proves, queen of the lake, and the land, and the land’s master. And the three hundred thousand pounds will more than clear away the mortgages, and I can take care of her jointure and the younger children. I like your choice exceedingly, Constance,” continued her father, drawing her to him on the bank.

"Oh, my dear father, I beseech you keep my secret!"

"Yes, yes, we'll keep the secret quite as long as it shall be necessary. Don't blush so, my charmer, for you have no need. Let me see—there must be a six months' mourning—but the preparations may be going on just the same. And, in spite of my foolish brother and his foolish will, my Constance will be lady of Lisle-End."

And within six months the wedding did take place; and, if there could be a happier person than the young bridegroom or his lovely bride, it was the despotic but kind-hearted governor.



## THE QUEEN OF THE MEADOW



## THE QUEEN OF THE MEADOW

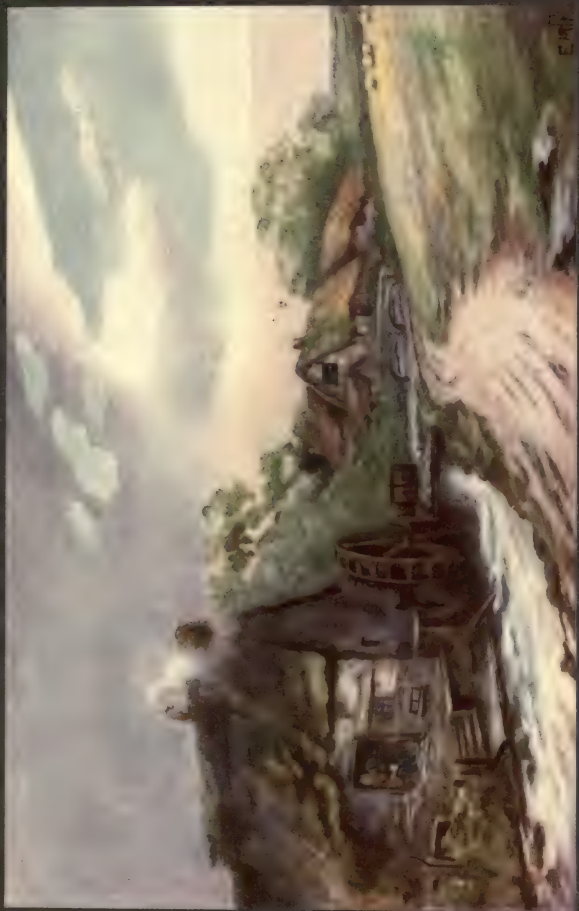
IN a winding unfrequented road in the south of England, close to a low, two-arched bridge thrown across a stream of more beauty than consequence, stood the small irregular dwelling and the picturesque buildings of Hatherford mill. It was a pretty scene on a summer afternoon was that old mill, with its strong lights and shadows, its low-browed cottage covered with the clustering pyracantha, and the clear brook, which, after dashing, and foaming, and brawling, and playing off all the airs of a mountain river whilst pent up in the mill stream, was no sooner let loose than it subsided into its natural peaceful character, and crept quietly along the valley, meandering through the green woody meadows, as tranquil a trout stream as ever Isaac Walton angled in. Many a passenger has stayed his step to admire the old buildings of Hatherford mill, backed by its dark orchard, especially when the accompanying figures, the jolly miller sitting before the door pipe in mouth and jug in hand like one of Teniers' boors, the mealy miller's man with his white sack over his shoulder carefully descending the out-of-doors steps,

and the miller's daughter flitting about amongst her poultry, gave life and motion to the picture.

The scenery on the other side of the road was equally attractive in a different style. Its principal feature was the great farm of the parish, an old manorial house, solid and venerable, with a magnificent clump of witch elms in front of the porch, a suburb of out-buildings behind, and an old-fashioned garden with its rows of espaliers, its wide flower borders, and its close filberd walk, stretching like a cape into the waters, the strawberry beds sloping into the very stream ; so that the cows which, in sultry weather, came down by twos and by threes from the opposite meadows to cool themselves in the water, could almost crop the leaves as they stood.

In my mind *that* was the pleasanter scene of the two ; but such could hardly have been the general opinion, since nine out of ten of the passers-by never vouchsafed a glance at the great farm, but kept their eyes steadily fixed on the mill ; perhaps to look at the old buildings, perhaps at the miller's young daughter.

Katy Dawson was accounted by common consent the prettiest girl in the parish. Female critics in beauty would, to be sure, limit the commendation by asserting that her features were irregular, that she had not a good feature in her face, and so forth ; but these remarks were always made in her absence ; and no sooner did she appear than even her critics felt the power of her exceed-







ing loveliness. It was the Hebe look of youth and health, the sweet and joyous expression, and above all the unrivalled brilliancy of colouring that made Katy's face with all its faults so pleasant to look upon. A complexion of the purest white, a coral lip, and a cheek like the pear, her namesake, on "the side that's next the sun," were relieved by rich curls of brown hair of the very hue of the glossy rind of the horse chestnut, turning when the sun shone on them into threads of gold. Her figure was well suited to her blossomy countenance, round, short, and childlike. Add to this "a pretty foot, a merry glance, a passing pleasing tongue," and no wonder that Katy was the belle of the village.

But gay and smiling though she were, the fair maid of the mill was little accessible to wooers.. Her mother had long been dead, and her father, who held her as the very apple of his eye, kept her carefully away from the rustic junketings, at which rural flirtations are usually begun. Accordingly, our village beauty had reached the age of eighteen without a lover. She had indeed had two offers : one from a dashing horse-dealer, who having seen her for five minutes one day, when her father called her to admire a nag that he was cheapening, proposed for her that very night as they were chaffering about the price, and took the refusal in such dudgeon that he would have left the house utterly inconsolable, had he not contrived to comfort himself by cheating the offending

papa twice as much as he intended in his horse bargain.

The other proffer was from a staid, thick, sober, silent, middle-aged personage, who united the offices of school-master and parish clerk, an old crony of the good miller's, in whose little parlour he had smoked his pipe regularly every Saturday evening for the last thirty years, and who called him still, from habit, "young Sam Robinson." He, one fine evening as they sat together smoking outside the door, broke his accustomed silence with a formal demand of his comrade's permission to present himself as a suitor to Miss Katy ; which permission being, as soon as her father could speak for astonishment, civilly refused, master Samuel Robinson addressed himself to his pipe again with his wonted phlegm, played a manful part in emptying the ale jug and discussing the Welsh rabbit, reappeared as usual on the following Saturday, and, to judge from his whole demeanour, seemed entirely to have forgotten his unlucky proposal.

Soon after the rejection of this most philosophical of all discarded swains, an important change took place in the neighbourhood, in the shape of a new occupant of the great farm. The quiet, respectable old couple, who had resided there for half a century, had erected the mossy sun-dial, and planted the great mulberry-tree, having determined to retire from business, were succeeded by a young tenant from a distant county, the younger

son of a gentleman brought up to agricultural pursuits, whose spirit and activity, his boldness in stocking and cropping, and his scientific management of manures and machinery, formed the strongest possible contrast with the old-world practices of his predecessors. All the village was full of admiration of the intelligent young farmer Edward Grey, who being unmarried, and of a kindly and social disposition, soon became familiar with high and low, and was nowhere a greater favourite than with his opposite neighbour, our good miller.

Katy's first feeling towards her new acquaintance was an awe altogether different from her usual shame-faceness ; a genuine fear of the quickness and talent which broke out not merely in his conversation but in every line of his acute and lively countenance. There was occasionally a sudden laughing light in his hazel eye, and a very arch and momentary smile, now seen and now gone, to which, becoming as most people thought them, she had a particular aversion. In short, she paid the young farmer, for so he insisted on being called, the compliment of running away as soon as he came in sight, for three calendar months. At the end of that time appearances mended. First she began to loiter at the door ; then she stayed in the room ; then she listened ; then she smiled ; then she laughed outright ; then she ventured to look up ; then she began to talk in her turn ; and before another

month had passed would prattle to Edward Grey as freely and fearlessly as to her own father.

On his side it was clear that the young farmer, with all his elegance and refinement, his education and intelligence, liked nothing better than this simple village lass. He passed over the little humours proper to her as a beauty and a spoiled child with the kindness of an indulgent brother ; was amused with her artlessness, and delighted with her gaiety. Gradually he began to find his own fireside too lonely, and the parties of the neighbourhood too boisterous : the little parlour of the miller formed just the happy medium, quietness without solitude, and society without dissipation, and thither he resorted accordingly. His spaniel Ranger taking possession of the middle of the hearth-rug, just as comfortably as if in his master's own demesnes, and Katy's large tabby cat, a dog-hater by profession, not merely submitting to the usurpation, but even ceasing to erect her bristles on his approach.

So the world waned for three months more. One or two little miffs had indeed occurred betwixt the parties. Once, for instance, at a fair held in the next town on the first of May, Katy having taken fright at the lions and tigers painted outside a show, had nevertheless been half led, half forced, into the booth, to look at the real living monsters, by her ungallant beau. This was a sad offence. But unluckily our village damsel had been so much



entertained by some monkeys and parrots on her first entrance, that she quite forgot to be frightened, and afterwards, when confronted with the royal brutes, had taken so great a fancy to a beautiful panther, as to wish to have him for a pet ; so that this quarrel passed away almost as soon as it began. The second was about the colour of a riband—an election riband. Katy having been much caught by the graceful person and gracious manner of a county candidate, who called to request her father's vote, had taken upon herself to canvas their opposite neighbour, and was exceedingly astonished to find her request refused, on no better plea than a difference from her favourite in political opinion, and a previous promise to his opponent. The little beauty, astonished at her want of influence, and rendered zealous by opposition, began to look grave, and parties would certainly have run high at Hatherford, had not her candidate put a stop to the dispute by declining to come to the poll. So that that quarrel was perforce pretermitted. At last a real and serious anxiety overclouded Katy's innocent happiness ; and as it often happens in this world of contradictions, the grievance took the form of a gratified wish.

Of all her relations her cousin Sophy Maynard had long been her favourite. She was an intelligent, unaffected young woman, a few years older than herself ; the daughter of a London tradesman, excellently brought up, with a great deal of information and taste, and a

total absence of airs and finery. In person she might almost be called plain, but there was such a natural gentility about her, her manners were so pleasing, and her conversation so attractive, that few people after passing an evening in her society remembered her want of beauty. She was exceedingly fond of the country and of her pretty cousin, who on her part looked up to her with much of the respectful fondness of a younger sister, and had thought to herself an hundred times when most pleased with their new neighbour, How I wish my cousin Sophy could see Edward Grey! And now that her cousin Sophy had seen Edward Grey, poor Katy would have given all that she possessed in the world if they had never met. They were evidently delighted with each other, and proclaimed openly their mutual good opinion. Sophy praised Mr. Grey's vivacity; Edward professed himself enchanted with Miss Maynard's voice. Each was astonished to find in the other a cultivation unusual in that rank of life. They talked, and laughed, and sang together, and seemed so happy that poor Katy, without knowing why, became quite miserable; flew from Edward, avoided Sophy, shrank away from her kind father, and found no rest or comfort except when she could creep alone to some solitary place, and give vent to her vexation in tears. Poor Katy! she could not tell what ailed her, but she was quite sure that she was wretched—and then she cried again.

In the meanwhile the intimacy between the new friends became closer and closer. There was an air of intelligence between them that might have puzzled wiser heads than that of our simple miller-maiden. A secret ;—could it be a love secret ?—and the influence of the gentleman was so open and avowed, that Sophy, when on the point of departure, consented to prolong her visit to Hatherford at his request, although she had previously resisted Katy's solicitations, and the hospitable urgency of her father.

Affairs were in this posture, when one fine evening towards the end of June, the cousins sallied forth for a walk, and were suddenly joined by Edward Grey, when at such a distance from the house as to prevent the possibility of Katy's stealing back thither, as had been her usual habit on such occasions. The path they chose led through long narrow meadows sloping down on either side to the winding stream, enclosed by high hedges, and seemingly shut out from the world. A pleasant walk it was through those newly mown meadows just cleared of the hay, with the bright rivulet meandering through banks so variously beautiful ; now fringed by rushes and sedges ; now bordered with little thickets of hawthorn and woodbine and the briar rose ; now overhung by a pollard ash, or a silver-barked beech, or a lime-tree in full blossom ; now a smooth turfy slope, green to the eye and soft to the foot ; and now again a rich embroidery

of the golden flag, the purple willowherb, the blue forget-me-not, and a "thousand fresh water flowers of several colours," making the bank as gay as a garden. It was impossible not to pause in this lovely spot; and Sophy who had been collecting a bright bunch of pink blossoms, the ragged robin, the wild rose, the crane's bill, and the fox-glove, or to use the prettier Irish name of that superb plant, the fairy-cap, appealed to Katy to "read a lecture of her country art," and show "what every flower as country people hold did signify"—a talent for which the young maid of the mill was as celebrated as Bellario. But poor Katy, who, declining Edward's offered arm, had loitered a little behind gathering long wreaths of the woodbine and the briony and the wild vetch, was, or pretended to be, deeply engaged in twisting the garland round her straw bonnet, and answered not a word. She tied on her bonnet however, and stood by listening, whilst the other two continued to talk of the symbolic meaning of flowers; quoting the well-known lines from the *Winter's Tale*, and the almost equally charming passage from *Philaster*.

At last Edward, who, during the conversation, had been gathering all that he could collect of the tall almond-scented tufts of the elegant meadow-sweet, whose crested blossoms arrange themselves into a plumage so richly delicate, said, holding up his nosegay, "I do not know what mystical interpretation may be attached to this



plant in Katy's country art, but it is my favourite amongst flowers ; and if I were inclined to follow the eastern fashion of courtship, and make love by a nosegay, I should certainly send it to plead my cause. And it shall be so," added he, after a short pause, his bright and sudden smile illumining his whole countenance. " The botanical name signifies the queen of the meadow, and wherever I offer this tribute, wherever I place this tuft, the homage of my heart, the proffer of my hand shall go also. Oh that the offering might find favour with *my* fair queen ! "

—Katy heard no more. She turned away to a little bay formed by the rivulet, where a bed of pebbles, overhung by a grassy bank, afforded a commodious seat, and there she sate her down, trembling, cold, and wretched, understanding for the first time her own feelings, and wondering if any body in all the world had ever been so unhappy before.

There she sate, with the tears rolling down her cheeks, unconsciously making " rings of rushes that grew thereby," and Edward's dog Ranger, who had been watching a shoal of minnows at play in the shallow water, and every now and then inserting his huge paw into the stream as if trying to catch one, came to her and laid his rough head and his long brown curling ears in her lap, and looked at her with " eyes whose human meaning did not need the aid of speech," eyes full of pity and of love ; for Ranger in common with all the four-footed world loved



Katy dearly ; and now he looked up in her face and licked her cold hand. Oh, kinder and more faithful than your master ! thought poor Katy, as with a fresh gush of tears she laid her sweet face on the dog's head, and sate in that position as it seemed to her for ages, whilst her companions were hooking and landing some white water lilies.

At last they approached, and she arose hastily and tremblingly and walked on, anxious to escape observation. "Your garland is loose, Katy," said Edward, lifting his hand to her bonnet. "Come and see how nicely I have fastened it ! No clearer mirror than the dark smooth basin of water under those hazels—Come !" He put her hand under his arm and led her thither, and there, when mechanically she cast her eyes on the stream, she saw the rich tuft of meadow-sweet, the identical queen of the meadow waving like a plume over her own straw bonnet : felt herself caught in Edward's arms, for between surprise and joy she had well-nigh fallen ; and when with instinctive modesty she escaped from his embrace, and took refuge with her cousin, the first sound that she heard was Sophy's affectionate whisper—"I knew it all the time, Katy ! Every body knew it but you ! and the wedding must be next week, for I have promised Edward to stay and be brides-maid."—And the very next week they were married.

A VILLAGE ROMANCE



## A VILLAGE ROMANCE

It was on a rainy day, late in last November, that Mrs. Villars came to take possession of her new residence, called the Lodge, a pretty house, situated within the boundaries of Oakhampstead Park, the pleasant demesne of her brother-in-law, Sir Arthur Villars, and generally appropriated to the use of some dowager of that ancient and wealthy race.

Mrs. Villars was an elderly lady, of moderate fortune, and excellent character. She was the widow of a dignified and richly-beneficed clergyman, who had been dead some years, and had left her with three promising sons and two pretty daughters, all of whom were now making their way in the world to her perfect satisfaction ;—the daughters happily and respectably married ; the sons thriving in different professions ; and all of them as widely scattered as the limits of our little island could well permit,—so that their mother, disencumbered of the cares of her offspring, had nothing now to prevent her accepting Sir Arthur's kind offer, of leaving the great town in which she had hitherto resided, and coming to

occupy the family-jointure house at Oakhampstead. To inhabit a mansion in which so many stately matrons of the house of Villars had lived and died, was a point of dignity no less than of economy ; and beside, there was no resisting so excellent an opportunity of gratifying, amidst the good archdeacon's native shades, the taste for retirement and solitude, of which she had all her life been accustomed to talk. Talk, indeed, she did so very much of this taste, that shrewd observers somewhat questioned its existence, and were not a little astonished when, after dallying away the summer over take-leave visits, she and her whole establishment (two maids, a pony-chaise, a tabby-cat, and her scrub Joseph) left C., with its society and amusements, its morning calls and evening parties, for solitude and the Lodge.

Never was place or season better calculated to bring a lover of retirement to the test. Oakhampstead was situated in the most beautiful and least inhabited part of a thinly inhabited and beautiful county ; the roads were execrable ; the nearest post-town was seven miles off ; the Vicar was a bachelor of eighty ; and the great house was shut up. There was not even one neighbour of decent station, to whom she might complain of the want of a neighbourhood. Poor Mrs. Villars ! The last stroke, too,—the desertion of the park,—was an unexpected calamity ; for, although she knew that Sir Arthur had never resided there since the death of a most beloved



daughter, after which event it had been entirely abandoned, except for a few weeks in the autumn, when his only son, Harry Villars, had been accustomed to visit it for the purpose of shooting, yet she had understood that this her favourite nephew was on the point of marriage with the beautiful heiress of General Egerton, and that this fine old seat was to form the future residence of the young couple. Something, she learned, had now occurred to prevent a union which, a few months ago, had seemed so desirable to all parties—some dispute between the fathers, originally trifling, but worked up into bitterness by the influence of temper ;—and all preparations were stopped, Harry Villars gone abroad, and the great house as much shut up as ever. Poor Mrs. Villars, who, after all her praises of retirement, and her declared love of solitude, could not, with any consistency, run away from this “Deserted Village,” was really as deserving of pity as any one guilty of harmless affectation well can be.

The good lady, however, was not wanting to herself in this emergency. She took cold, that she might summon an apothecary from the next town ; and she caused her pigs to commit a trespass on the garden of a litigious farmer, that she might have an excuse for consulting the nearest attorney. Both resources failed. The medical man was one of eminent skill and high practice, whom nothing but real illness could allure into constant attendance ; and the lawyer was honest, and settled the affair

of the pigs at a single visit. All that either could do for her, was to enumerate two or three empty houses that might possibly be filled, and two or three people who would probably call when the roads became passable. So that poor Mrs. Villars, after vainly trying to fill up her vacant hours—alas! all her hours!—by superintending her own poultry yard, overlooking the village school, giving away flannel petticoats, and relieving half the old women in the parish, had very nearly made up her mind to find the Lodge disagree with her, and to return to her old quarters at C., when the arrival of a fresh inmate at the next farm-house, gave an unexpected interest to her own situation.

Oakhampstead was, as I have said, a very beautiful spot. Its chief beauty consisted in a small lake or mere without the park, surrounded partly by pastoral meadow grounds, and partly by very wild and romantic woodland scenery, amongst which grew some of the noblest oaks in the kingdom. The water did not, perhaps, cover more than thirty acres; although a length disproportioned to its breadth, a bend in the middle, and, above all, the infinite variety of its shores, indented with tiny bays and jutting out into mimic promontories, gave it an appearance of much greater extent. Rides and walks had formerly been cut around it; but these were now rude and overgrown, the rustic seats decayed and fallen, and the summer-houses covered with ivy and creeping plants.

Since the absence of Sir Arthur, neglect had succeeded to care ; but a poet or a painter would have felt that the scene had gained in picturesqueness what it had lost in ornament. A green boat, however, and a thatched boat-house still remained in excellent preservation, under the shadow of some magnificent elms ; and the chimney of the boatman's cottage might just be seen peeping between the trees, over the high embankment which formed the head of the lake. The only other habitation visible from the water was an old farm-house, the abode of farmer Ashton, whose wife, formerly the personal attendant of the late Lady Villars, had soon been found by her surviving relative to be by far the most conversable person in the place ; and if the many demands on her attention, the care of men, maids, cows, calves, pigs, turkeys, geese, ducks, chickens, and children, would have allowed her to devote much time to that unfortunate lady, her society would doubtless have proved a great solace and resource. But Mrs. Ashton, with all her desire to oblige Mrs. Villars, was enviably busy, and could only at short and distant intervals listen to, and, by listening, relieve the intolerable ennui of her seclusion.

Now, however, a fresh inmate had made her appearance at the farm : a young woman, whom Mrs. Ashton called Ellen, and introduced as her niece ; who having much leisure (for apparently she did nothing in the family but assist in the lighter needle-work), and evinc-

ing, as far as great modesty and diffidence would permit, her respectful sympathy with the involuntary recluse, became her favourite auditress during her frequent visits to farmer Ashton's ; and was soon sent for as a visitor (an humble visitor, for neither Mrs. Villars nor her young guest ever forgot the difference of their stations) at the Lodge. Seldom a day passed without Joseph and the pony-chaise being sent to fetch Ellen from the farm. Nothing went well without her.

Partly, of course, the charm might be resolvable into the bare fact of getting a listener ; any good listener would have been a welcome acquisition in this emergency ; that is to say, any one who felt and shewed a genuine sympathy with the "fair afflicted ;" but few could have been so thoroughly welcome as Ellen, who soon became, on the score of her own merits, a first-rate favourite with Mrs. Villars.

Whether Ellen was pretty or not, was a standing question in the village of Oakhampstead. Her zealous patroness answered without the slightest hesitation in the affirmative. Other people doubted. For the common sort, her face and figure wanted showiness ; whilst the young farmers and persons of that class complained that she was not, according to their notions, sufficiently genteel : Mrs. Villars's man-of-all-work, Joseph, combined both objections, by declaring that Ellen would be well enough if she were smarter. My readers must judge for



themselves, as well at least as a pen-and-ink drawing will enable them.

Her figure was round and short, and piquante and youthful. Her face was round also, with delicate features and a most delicate complexion, as white and smooth as ivory, and just coloured enough for health. She had finely-cut grey eyes, with dark eyebrows and eyelashes, a profusion of dark hair, and a countenance so beaming with gaiety and sweetness, that the expression was always like that of other faces when they smile. Then her voice and accent were enchanting. She sang little snatches of old airs in gushes like a nightingale—freely—spontaneously, as if she could no more help singing as she went about, than that “angel of the air ;” and her spoken words were as musical and graceful as her songs ; what she said being always sweet, gentle, and intelligent ; sometimes very lively, and sometimes a little sad.

Her dress was neat and quiet,—plain, dark gowns, fitting with great exactness, such as were equally becoming to her station and her figure ; delicately-white caps and habit-shirts, and the simplest of all simple straw-bonnets. The only touch of finery about her was in her chaussure ; the silk stockings and kid slippers in which her beautiful little feet were always clad, and in her scrupulously clean and new-looking French gloves, of the prettiest pale colours ;—a piece of Quaker-like



and elegant extravagance, which, as well as the purity of her accent and diction, somewhat astonished Mrs. Villars, until she found from Mrs. Ashton, that Ellen also had been a lady's maid, admitted early into the family, and treated almost as a companion by her young mistress.

"Where had she lived?" was the next question.

"In General Egerton's family," was the reply; and a new source of interest and curiosity was opened to the good lady, who had never seen her niece, that was to have been, and was delighted with the opportunity of making a variety of inquiries respecting herself and her connexions. Ellen's answers to these questions were given with great brevity and some reluctance; she looked down and blushed, and fidgeted with a sprig of myrtle that she held in her hand, in a manner widely different from her usual lady-like composure.

"Was Miss Egerton so very handsome?"

"Oh no!"

"So very accomplished?"

"No."

"Did Harry love her very much?"

"Yes."

"Did she love him?"

"Oh yes!"

"Was she worthy of him?"

"No."

“ Ah ! ” said Mrs. Villars, “ I thought she was too fine a lady ; too full of airs and graces ! I had my doubts of her ever since a note that she sent me, written on blue embossed paper, and smelling most atrociously of otto of roses. I dare say Harry has had a narrow escape. Sir Arthur, even before the quarrel, said she was quite a *petite maîtresse*. Then you think, Ellen, that my nephew is better without her ? ”

This query caused a good deal of blushing hesitation, and nearly demolished the sprig of myrtle. On its being repeated, she said she did not know ! She could not tell ! She did not wish to speak ill of Miss Egerton ; but few ladies appeared to her worthy of Mr. Villars—he was so amiable.

“ Was Miss Egerton kind to her ? ”

“ Pretty well,” answered Ellen quietly.

“ And the General ? ”

“ Oh, very ! very ! ” rejoined Ellen, sighing deeply.

“ Why did she leave the family ? ”

At this question poor Ellen burst into tears, and the conversation ended. Mrs. Villars, unwilling to distress her favourite, did not resume it. She was already pre-possessed against the Egertons by the disappointment and vexation which they had occasioned to her nephew, and had little doubt but that either the General or his daughter had behaved unjustly or unkindly to Ellen.

Winter had now worn away ; even those remains of

winter which linger so long amidst the buds and blossoms of spring ; spring itself had passed into summer ; the country was every day assuming fresh charms, the roads were becoming passable, and distant neighbours were beginning to discover and to value the lady of the Lodge, who became every day more reconciled to her residence, varied as it now was by occasional visits to the county families, and frequent excursions with Ellen upon the lake.

On these occasions they were constantly attended by the boatman, a handy, good-humoured, shock-pated fellow, of extraordinary ugliness, commonly called Bob Green, but also known by the name of " Hopping Bob ; " not on account of his proficiency in that one-legged accomplishment, as the cognomen would seem to imply, but because an incurable lameness in the hip had produced a jerking sort of motion in walking, much resembling that mode of progress ; and had also given a peculiar one-sided look to his short, muscular figure. The hop, it must be confessed, stood much in his way on land, although he was excellent in the management of a boat ; in rowing, or steering, or fishing, or anything that had relation to the water.

A clever fellow was Bob, in his way, and a civil, and paid much attention to his lady and her young companion ; and, as the summer advanced, they passed more and more time on the beautiful lake, of which they con-

tinued the sole visitors ; the great house being still deserted, and little heard either of Sir Arthur or his son.

One afternoon, Mrs. Villars, returning unexpectedly from a distant visit, drove down to the farm, intending to spend the evening with Ellen in the pleasure-boat. It was a bright sunny day, towards the middle of July. The blue sky, dappled with fleecy clouds, was reflected on the calm clear water, and mingled with the shadows of the trees upon the banks, to which the sun, shining through the tall oaks, gave occasionally a transparent glitter, as of emeralds or beryls ; swallows skimmed over the lake, flitting around and about, after the myriads of insects that buzzed in the summer air ; the white water-lily lay in its pure beauty in the midst of its deep green leaves ; the fox-glove and the wild vetch were glowing in the woods ; the meadow-sweet, the willow herb, and the golden flag, fringed the banks ; cows stood cooling their limbs in the shallow indented bays, and a flock of sheep was lying at rest in the distant meadows.

Altogether it was a scene of sweet and soothing beauty ; and Mrs. Villars was looking for Ellen, to partake in her enjoyment (for Ellen, Mrs. Ashton had told her, was gone down to the mere), when, in a small cove at the other side of the lake, she beheld in a fine effect of sunny light, the boat, their own identical green boat, resting quietly on the water, with two persons sitting in

it, seemingly in earnest conversation. One of the figures was most undoubtedly Ellen. Her astonished friend recognised at a glance her lead-coloured gown, her straw bonnet, and that peculiar air and attitude which gave grace and beauty to her simple dress. The other was a man, tall as it seemed, and elegant—most certainly a gentleman. Mrs. Villars even fancied that the height and bearing had a strong resemblance to her own dear nephew, Harry; and immediately a painful suspicion of the possible cause of Ellen's leaving Miss Egerton forced itself upon her mind. Harry had perhaps found the lady's maid no less charming than her mistress. A thousand trifling circumstances in favour of this opinion rushed on her recollection: Ellen's blushes when Harry was accidentally named; her constant avoidance of all mention of the family in which she had resided; the great inequality of her spirits; her shrinking from the very sight of chance visitors; the emotion amounting to pain, which any remarkable instance of kindness or confidence never failed to occasion her; and, above all, the many times in which, after seeming on the point of making some avowal to her kind patroness, she had drawn suddenly back: all these corroborating circumstances pressed at once, with startling distinctness, on Mrs. Villars's memory; and, full of care, she returned to the farm, to cross-question Mrs. Ashton.

Never was examination more thoroughly unsatisfactory.



Mrs. Ashton was that provoking and refractory thing, a reluctant witness. First she disputed the facts of the case : “ Had Mrs. Villars seen the boat ? Was she sure that she had seen it ? Was it actually their own green boat ? Did it really contain two persons ? And was the female certainly Ellen ? ” All these questions being answered in the affirmative, Mrs. Ashton shifted her ground, and asserted, that “ if the female in question were certainly Ellen, her companion must with equal certainty have been the boatman, Bob Green, ‘ Hopping Bob,’ as he was called ” ; and the farmer coming in at the moment, she called on him to support her assertion, which, without hearing a word of the story, he did most positively, as an obedient husband should do—“ Yes, for certain, it must be Hopping Bob ! It could be no other ! ”

“ Hopping Bob ! ” ejaculated Mrs. Villars, whose patience was by this time well-nigh exhausted : “ Hopping Bob ! when I have told you that the person in the boat was a young man, a tall man, a slim man, a gentleman ! Hopping Bob, indeed ! ” and before the words were fairly uttered, in hopped Bob himself.

To Mrs. Villars, this apparition gave unqualified satisfaction, by affording, as she declared, the most triumphant evidence of an *alibi* ever produced in or out of a court of justice. Her opponent, however, was by no means disposed to yield the point. She had perfect confidence

in Bob's quickness of apprehension, and no very strong fear of his abstract love of truth, and determined to try the effect of a leading question. She immediately, therefore, asked him, with much significance of manner, "whether he had not just landed from the lake, and reached the farm by the short cut across the coppice?" adding, "that her niece had probably walked towards the boat-house to meet Mrs. Villars, and that Bob had better go and fetch her."

This question, however, produced no other answer than a long shrill whistle from the sagacious boatman. Whether Mrs. Ashton over-rated his ability, or under-rated his veracity, or whether his shrewdness foresaw that detection was inevitable, and that it would "hurt his conscience to be found out," whichever were the state of the case, he positively declined giving any evidence on the question; and after standing for a few moments eyeing his hostess with a look of peculiar knowingness, vented another long whistle, and hopped off again!

Mrs. Villars, all her fears confirmed, much disgusted with the farmer, and still more so with the farmer's wife, was also departing, when just as she reached the porch, she saw two persons advancing from the lake to the house—her nephew, Harry Villars, and Ellen leaning on his arm!

With a countenance full of grieved displeasure, she walked slowly towards them. Harry sprang forward to

meet her : " Hear me but for one moment, my dearest aunt ! Listen but to four words, and then say what you will. This is my wife."

" Your wife ! why, I thought you loved Miss Egerton ? "

" Well, and this *is*, or rather happily for me, this *was* Miss Egerton ;" replied Harry, smiling.

" Miss Egerton !" exclaimed the amazed and half incredulous Mrs. Villars, " Miss Egerton ! Ellen, that was not smart enough for Joseph—the fine lady that sent me the rose-scented note !—Ellen, at the farm, the great heiress !—my own good little Ellen ! "

" Ay, my dear aunt,—your own Ellen, and my own Ellen,—blessings on that word ! When we were parted on a foolish political quarrel between our fathers, she was sent, under the care of her cousin, Lady Jerningham, to Florence. Lady Jerningham was much my friend.—She not only persuaded Ellen into marrying me privately, but managed to make the General believe that his daughter continued her inmate abroad ; whilst Mrs. Ashton, another good friend of mine, contrived to receive her at home. We have been sad deceivers," continued Harry, " and at last Ellen, fettered by a promise of secrecy, which your kindness tempted her every moment to break, could bear the deceit no longer. She wrote to her father, and I spoke to mine ; and they are reconciled, and all is forgiven. I see that you forgive us," added

he, as his sweet wife lay sobbing on Mrs. Villars's bosom, —“I see that you forgive *her*; and you must forgive me, too, for her dear sake. Your pardon is essential to our happiness; for we are really to live at the park, and one of our first wishes must always be, that you may continue at the great house the kindness that you have shewn to Ellen at the farm.”

## THÉRÈSE





## THÉRÈSE

ONE of the prettiest dwellings in our neighbourhood, is the Lime Cottage at Burley-Hatch. It consists of a small low-browed habitation, so entirely covered with jessamine, honeysuckle, passion-flowers, and china roses, as to resemble a bower, and is placed in the centre of a large garden,—turf and flowers before, vegetables and fruit trees behind, backed by a superb orchard, and surrounded by a quickset hedge, so thick and close, and regular, as to form an impregnable defence to the territory which it encloses—a thorny rampart, a living and growing *chevaux-de-frise*. On either side of the neat gravel walk, which leads from the outer gate to the door of the cottage, stand the large and beautiful trees to which it owes its name; spreading their strong, broad shadow over the turf beneath, and sending, on a summer afternoon, their rich, spicy fragrance half across the irregular village green, dappled with wood and water, and gay with sheep, cattle, and children, which divides them at the distance of a quarter of a mile from the little hamlet of Burley, its venerable church and handsome rectory, and its short straggling street of cottages, and cottage-like houses.

Such is the habitation of Thérèse de G., an émigrée of distinction, whose aunt having married an English officer, was luckily able to afford her niece an asylum during the horrors of the Revolution, and to secure to her a small annuity, and the Lime Cottage after her death. There she has lived for these five-and-thirty years, gradually losing sight of her few and distant foreign connexions, and finding all her happiness in her pleasant home and her kind neighbours—a standing lesson of cheerfulness and contentment.

A very popular person is Mademoiselle Thérèse—popular both with high and low; for the prejudice which the country people almost universally entertain against foreigners, vanished directly before the charm of her manners, the gaiety of her heart, and the sunshine of a temper that never knows a cloud. She is so kind to them too, so liberal of the produce of her orchard and garden, so full of resource in their difficulties, and so sure to afford sympathy if she have nothing else to give, that the poor all idolise Mademoiselle. Among the rich, she is equally beloved. No party is complete without the pleasant Frenchwoman, whose amenity and cheerfulness, her perfect, general politeness, her attention to the old, the poor, the stupid, and the neglected, are felt to be invaluable in society. Her conversation is not very powerful either, nor very brilliant; she never says any thing remarkable—but then it is so good-natured,

so genuine, so unpretending, so constantly up and alive, that one would feel its absence far more than that of a more shewy and ambitious talker ;—to say nothing of the charm which it derives from her language, which is alternately the most graceful, and purest French, and the most diverting and absurd broken English ;—a dialect in which, whilst contriving to make herself perfectly understood both by gentle and simple, she does also contrive in the course of an hour, to commit more blunders, than all the other foreigners in England make in a month.

Her appearance betrays her country almost as much as her speech. She is a French-looking little personage, with a slight, active figure, exceedingly nimble and alert in every movement ; a round and darkly-complexioned face, somewhat faded and *passée*, but still striking from the laughing eyes, the bland and brilliant smile, and the great mobility of expression. Her features, pretty as they are, want the repose of an English countenance ; and her air, gesture, and dress, are decidedly foreign, all alike deficient in the English charm of quietness. Nevertheless, in her youth, she must have been pretty ; so pretty that some of our young ladies, scandalised at finding their favourite an old maid, have invented sundry legends to excuse the solecism, and talk of duels fought *pour l'amour des beaux yeux*, and of a betrothed lover guillotined in the Revolution. And the thing may have been

so ; although one meets everywhere with old maids who have been pretty, and whose lovers have not been guillotined ; and although Mademoiselle Thérèse has not, to do her justice, the least in the world the air of a heroine crossed in love. The thing may be so ; but I doubt it much. I rather suspect our fair Demoiselle of having been in her youth a little, a very little, the least in the world of a flirt. Even during her residence at Burley-Hatch, hath not she indulged in divers very distant, very discreet, very decorous, but still very evident flirtations ? Did not Doctor Abdy, the portly, ruddy school-master of B., dangle after her for three mortal years, holidays excepted ? And did not she refuse him at last ? And Mr. Foreclose, the thin, withered, wrinkled city solicitor, a man, so to say, smoke-dried, who comes down every year to Burley for the air, did not he do suit and service to her during four long-vacations, with the same ill success ? Was not Sir Thomas himself a little smitten ? Nay even now, does not the good major, a halting veteran of seventy—but really it is too bad to tell tales out of the parish—all that is certain is, that Mademoiselle Thérèse might have changed her name, long before now, had she so chosen ; and that it is most probable that she will never change it at all.

Her household consists of her little maid Betsy, a cherry-cheeked, blue-eyed country lass, brought up by herself, who, with a full clumsy figure, and a fair, inno-



cent, unmeaning countenance, copies as closely as these obstacles will permit, the looks and gestures of her alert and vivacious mistress, and has even caught her broken English ;—of a fat lap-dog called Fido, silky, sleepy and sedate ;—and of a beautiful white Spanish ass, called Donnabella, an animal docile and spirited, far beyond the generality of that despised race, who draws her little donkey-chaise half the country over, runs to her the moment she sees her, and eats roses, bread and apples from her hand ; but who, accustomed to be fed and groomed, harnessed and driven only by females, resists and rebels the moment she is approached by the rougher sex ; has overturned more boys, and kicked more men, than any donkey in the kingdom ; and has acquired such a character for restiveness amongst the grooms in the neighbourhood, that when Mademoiselle Thérèse goes out to dinner, Betsy is fain to go with her to drive Donna-bella home again, and to return to fetch her mistress in the evening.

If every body is delighted to receive this most welcome visitor, so is every body delighted to accept her graceful invitations, and meet to eat strawberries at Burley-Hatch. Oh, how pleasant are those summer afternoons, sitting under the blossomed limes, with the sun shedding a golden light through the broad branches, the bees murmuring over head, roses and lilies all about us, and the choicest fruit served up in wicker baskets of her own

making—itself a picture ! the guests looking so pleased and happy, and the kind hostess the gayest and happiest of all. Those are pleasant meetings ; nor are her little winter parties less agreeable, when to two or three female friends assembled round their coffee, she will tell thrilling anecdotes of that terrible Revolution, so fertile in great crimes and great virtues ; or gayer stories of the brilliant days preceding that convulsion, the days which Madame de Genlis has described so well, when Paris was the capital of pleasure, and amusement the business of life ; illustrating her descriptions by a series of spirited drawings of costumes and characters done by herself, and always finishing by producing a group of Louis Seize, Marie Antoinette, the Dauphin, and Madame Elizabeth, as she had last seen them at Versailles—the only recollection that ever brings tears into her smiling eyes.

Mademoiselle Thérèse's loyalty to the Bourbons, is in truth a very real feeling. Her family had been about the Court, and she had imbibed an enthusiasm for the royal sufferers, natural to a young and a warm heart—she loved the Bourbons, and hated Napoleon with like ardour. All her other French feelings had for some time been a little modified. She was not quite so sure as she had been, that France was the only country, and Paris the only city of the world ; that Shakespeare was a barbarian, and Milton no poet ; that the perfume of English limes, was nothing compared to French orange trees ;

that the sun never shone in England ; and that sea-coal fires were bad things. She still, indeed, would occasionally make these assertions, especially if dared to make them—but her faith in them was shaken. Her loyalty to her legitimate king, was however as strong as ever, and that loyalty had nearly cost us our dear Mademoiselle. After the Restoration, she hastened as fast as steamboat and diligence could carry her, to enjoy the delight of seeing once more the Bourbons at the Tuileries ; took leave, between smiles and tears, of her friends, and of Burley-Hatch, carrying with her a branch of the lime tree, then in blossom, and commissioning her old lover, Mr. Foreclose, to dispose of the cottage : but in less than three months, luckily before Mr. Foreclose had found a purchaser, Mademoiselle Thérèse came home again. She complained of nobody ; but times were altered. The house in which she was born was pulled down ; her friends were scattered, her kindred dead ; Madame did not remember her (she had probably never heard of her in her life) ; the king did not know her again (poor man ! he had not seen her for these thirty years) ; Paris was a new city ; the French were a new people ; she missed the sea-coal fire ; and for the stunted orange trees at the Tuileries, what were they compared with the blossomed limes of Burley-Hatch !



JESSY OF KIBE'S FARM





## JESSY OF KIBE'S FARM

ABOUT the centre of a deep winding and woody lane, in the secluded village of Aberleigh, stands an old farmhouse, whose stables, out-buildings, and ample yard, have a peculiarly forlorn and deserted appearance ; they can, in fact, scarcely be said to be occupied, the person who rents the land preferring to live at a large farm about a mile distant, leaving this lonely house to the care of a labourer and his wife, who reside in one end, and have the charge of a few colts and heifers that run in the orchard and an adjoining meadow, whilst the vacant rooms are tenanted by a widow in humble circumstances and her young family.

The house is beautifully situated ; deep, as I have said, in a narrow woody lane, which winds between high banks, now feathered with hazel, now thickly studded with pollards and forest trees, until opposite Kibe's farm it widens sufficiently to admit a large clear pond, round which the hedge, closely and regularly set with a row of tall elms, sweeps in a graceful curve, forming for that bright mirror, a rich leafy frame. A little way farther

on the lane again widens, and makes an abrupt winding, as it is crossed by a broad shallow stream, a branch of the Loddon, which comes meandering along from a chain of beautiful meadows ; then turns in a narrower channel by the side of the road, and finally spreads itself into a large piece of water, almost a lakelet, amidst the rushes and willows of Hartly Moor. A foot-bridge is flung over the stream, where it crosses the lane, which, with a giant oak growing on the bank, and throwing its broad branches far on the opposite side, forms in every season a pretty rural picture.

Kibe's farm is as picturesque as its situation ; very old, very irregular, with gable ends, clustered chimneys, casement windows, a large porch, and a sort of square wing jutting out even with the porch, and covered with a luxuriant vine, which has quite the effect, especially when seen by moonlight, of an ivy-mantled tower. On one side extend the ample but disused farm buildings ; on the other the old orchard, whose trees are so wild, so hoary and so huge, as to convey the idea of a fruit forest. Behind the house is an ample kitchen-garden, and before a neat flower court, the exclusive demesne of Mrs. Lucas and her family, to whom indeed the labourer, John Miles, and his good wife Dinah, served in some sort as domestics.

Mrs. Lucas had known far better days. Her husband had been an officer, and died fighting bravely in one of







the last battles of the Peninsular war, leaving her with three children, one lovely boy and two delicate girls, to struggle through the world as best she might. She was an accomplished woman, and at first settled in a great town, and endeavoured to improve her small income by teaching music and languages. But she was country bred ; her children too had been born in the country, amidst the sweetest recesses of the New Forest, and pining herself for liberty, and solitude, and green fields, and fresh air, she soon began to fancy that her children were visibly deteriorating in health and appearance and pining for them also ; and finding that her old servant Dinah Miles was settled with her husband in this deserted farm-house, she applied to his master to rent for a few months the untenanted apartments, came to Aberleigh, and fixed there apparently for life.

We lived in different parishes, and she declined company, so that I seldom met Mrs. Lucas, and had lost sight of her for some years, retaining merely a general recollection of the mild, placid, elegant mother, surrounded by three rosy, romping, bright-eyed children, when the arrival of an intimate friend at Aberleigh rectory caused me frequently to pass the lonely farm-house, and threw this interesting family again under my observation.

The first time that I saw them was on a bright summer evening, when the nightingale was yet in the coppice,

the briar rose blossoming in the hedge, and the sweet scent of the bean fields perfuming the air. Mrs. Lucas, still lovely and elegant, though somewhat faded and careworn, was walking pensively up and down the grass path of the pretty flower court; her eldest daughter, a rosy bright brunette, with her dark hair floating in all directions, was darting about like a bird; now tying up the pinks, now watering the geraniums, now collecting the fallen rose leaves into the straw bonnet which dangled from her arm; and now feeding a brood of bantams from a little barley measure, which that sagacious and active colony seemed to recognise as if by instinct, coming long before she called them at their swiftest pace, between a run and a fly, to await with their usual noisy and bustling patience the showers of grain which she flung to them across the paling. It was a beautiful picture of youth, and health, and happiness; and her clear gay voice, and brilliant smile, accorded well with a shape and motion as light as a butterfly, and as wild as the wind. A beautiful picture was that rosy lass of fifteen in her unconscious loveliness, and I might have continued gazing on her longer, had I not been attracted by an object no less charming, although in a very different way.

It was a slight elegant girl, apparently about a year younger than the pretty romp of the flower garden, not unlike her in form and feature, but totally distinct in colouring and expression.

She sate in the old porch, wreathed with jessamine and honeysuckle, with the western sun floating around her like a glory, and displaying the singular beauty of her chestnut hair, brown with a golden light, and the exceeding delicacy of her smooth and finely grained complexion, so pale, and yet so healthful. Her whole face and form had a bending and statue-like grace, increased by the adjustment of her splendid hair, which was parted on her white forehead, and gathered up behind in a large knot—a natural coronet. Her eyebrows and long eyelashes were a few shades darker than her hair, and singularly rich and beautiful. She was plaiting straw rapidly and skilfully, and bent over her work with a mild and placid attention, a sedate pensiveness that did not belong to her age, and which contrasted strangely and sadly with the gaiety of her laughing and brilliant sister, who at this moment darted up to her with a handful of pinks and some groundsel. Jessy received them with a smile—such a smile!—spoke a few sweet words in a sweet sighing voice; put the flowers in her bosom, and the groundsel in the cage of a linnet that hung near her; and then resumed her seat and her work, imitating better than I have ever heard them imitated, the various notes of a nightingale who was singing in the opposite hedge; whilst I, ashamed of loitering longer, passed on.

The next time I saw her, my interest in this lovely creature was increased tenfold—for I then knew that

Jessy was blind—a misfortune always so touching, especially in early youth, and in her case rendered peculiarly affecting by the personal character of the individual. We soon became acquainted, and even intimate under the benign auspices of the kind mistress of the rectory; and every interview served to increase the interest excited by the whole family, and most of all by the sweet blind girl.

Never was any human being more gentle, generous, and grateful, or more unfeignedly resigned to her great calamity. The pensiveness that marked her character arose as I soon perceived from a different source. Her blindness had been of recent occurrence, arising from inflammation unskilfully treated, and was pronounced incurable; but from coming on so lately, it admitted of several alleviations, of which she was accustomed to speak with a devout and tender gratitude. “She could work,” she said, “as well as ever; and cut out, and write, and dress herself, and keep the keys, and run errands in the house she knew so well without making any mistake or confusion. Reading, to be sure, she had been forced to give up, and drawing; and some day or other she would shew me, only that it seemed so vain, some verses which her dear brother William had written upon a group of wild flowers, which she had begun before her misfortune. Oh, it was almost worth while to be blind to be the subject of such verse, and the object of such

affection ! Her dear mamma was very good to her, and so was Emma ; but William—oh she wished that I knew William ! No one could be so kind as he ! It was impossible ! He read to her ; he talked to her ; he walked with her ; he taught her to feel confidence in walking alone ; he had made for her use the wooden steps up the high bank which led into Kibe's meadow ; he had put the hand-rail on the old bridge, so that now she could get across without danger, even when the brook was flooded. He had tamed her linnet ; he had constructed the wooden frame, by the aid of which she could write so comfortably and evenly ; could write letters to him, and say her own self all that she felt of love and gratitude. And that," she continued with a deep sigh, "was her chief comfort now ; for William was gone, and they should never meet again—never alive—that she was sure of—she knew it." "But why, Jessy ?" "Oh, because William was so much too good for this world : there was nobody like William ! And he was gone for a soldier. Old General Lucas, her father's uncle, had sent for him abroad ; had given him a commission in his regiment ; and he would never come home—at least they should never meet again—of that she was sure—she knew it."

This persuasion was evidently the master-grief of poor Jessy's life, the cause that far more than her blindness faded her cheek, and saddened her spirit. How it had



arisen no one knew ; partly, perhaps, from some lurking superstition, some idle word, or idler omen which had taken root in her mind, nourished by the calamity which in other respects she bore so calmly, but which left her so often in darkness and loneliness to brood over her own gloomy forebodings ; partly from her trembling sensibility, and partly from the delicacy of frame and of habit which had always characterised the object of her love—a slender youth, whose ardent spirit was but too apt to overtask his body.

However it found admittance, there the presentiment was, hanging like a dark cloud over the sunshine of Jessy's young life. Reasoning was useless. They know little of the passions who seek to argue with that most intractable of them all, the fear that is born of love ; so Mrs. Lucas and Emma tried to amuse away these sad thoughts, trusting to time, to William's letters, and, above all, to William's return to eradicate the evil.

The letters came punctually and gaily ; letters that might have quieted the heart of any sister in England, except the fluttering heart of Jessy Lucas. William spoke of improved health, of increased strength, of actual promotion, and expected recall. At last he even announced his return under auspices the most gratifying to his mother, and the most beneficial to her family. The régiment was ordered home, and the old and wealthy relation, under whose protection he had already risen

so rapidly, had expressed his intention to accompany him to Kibe's farm, to be introduced to his nephew's widow and daughters, especially Jessy, for whom he expressed himself greatly interested. A letter from General Lucas himself, which arrived by the same post, was still more explicit : it adduced the son's admirable character and exemplary conduct as reasons for befriending the mother, and avowed his design of providing for each of his young relatives, and of making William his heir.

For half an hour after the first hearing of these letters, Jessy was happy—till the peril of a winter voyage (for it was deep January) crossed her imagination, and checked her joy. At length, long before they were expected, another epistle arrived, dated Portsmouth. They had sailed by the next vessel to that which conveyed their previous despatches, and might be expected hourly at Kibe's farm. The voyage was past, safely past, and the weight seemed now really taken from Jessy's heart. She raised her sweet face and smiled ; yet still it was a fearful and a trembling joy, and somewhat of fear was mingled even with the very intensity of her hope. It had been a time of rain and wind ; and the Loddon, the beautiful Loddon, always so affluent of water, had overflowed its boundaries, and swelled the smaller streams which it fed into torrents. The brook which crossed Kibe's lane had washed away part of the foot-bridge, destroying poor William's railing, and was still foaming and dashing like

a cataract. Now that was the nearest way ; and if William should insist on coming that way ! To be sure, the carriage road was round by Grazely Green, but to cross the brook would save half a mile ; and William, dear William, would never think of danger to get to those whom he loved. These were Jessy's thoughts : the fear seemed impossible, for no postillion would think of breasting that roaring stream ; but the fond sister's heart was fluttering like a new-caught bird, and she feared she knew not what.

All day she paced the little court, and stopped and listened, and listened and stopped. About sunset, with the nice sense of sound which seemed to come with her fearful calamity, and that fine sense, quickened by anxiety, expectation, and love, she heard, she thought she heard, she was sure she heard the sound of a carriage rapidly advancing on the other side of the stream. " It is only the noise of the rushing waters," cried Emma. " I hear a carriage, the horses, the wheels ! " replied Jessy ; and darted off at once, with the double purpose of meeting William, and of warning the postillion against crossing the stream. Emma and her mother followed, fast ! fast ! But what speed could vie with Jessy's, when the object was William ? They called ; but she neither heard nor answered. Before they had won to the bend in the lane she had reached the brook ; and, long before either of her pursuers had gained the bridge, her foot had slipped

from the wet and tottering plank, and she was borne resistlessly down the stream. Assistance was immediately procured ; men, and ropes, and boats ; for the sweet blind girl was beloved of all, and many a poor man perilled his life in a fruitless endeavour to save Jessy Lucas ; and William, too, was there, for Jessy's quickened sense had not deceived her. William was there, struggling with all the strength of love and agony to rescue that dear and helpless creature ; but every effort—although he persevered until he too was taken out senseless—every effort was vain. The fair corpse was recovered, but life was extinct. Poor Jessy's prediction was verified to the letter ; and the brother and his favourite sister never met again.





## THE RAT-CATCHER

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

## THE RAT-CATCHER

BEAUTIFULLY situated on a steep knoll, overhanging a sharp angle in the turnpike road, which leads through our village of Aberleigh, stands a fantastic rustic building, with a large yew tree on one side, a superb weeping ash hanging over it on the other, a clump of elms forming a noble back-ground behind, and all the prettinesses of porches garlanded with clematis, windows mantled with jessamine, and chimneys wreathed with luxuriant ivy, adding grace to the picture. To form a picture, most assuredly, it was originally built,—a point of view, as it is called, from Allonby Hall, to which the bye-road that winds round this inland cape, or headland, directly leads ; and most probably it was also copied from some book of tasteful designs for lodges or ornamented cottages, since not only the building itself, but the winding path that leads up the acclivity, and the gate which gives entrance to the little garden, smack of the pencil and the graver.

For a picture certainly, and probably from a picture, was that cottage erected, although its ostensible purpose

was merely that of a receiving-house for letters and parcels for the Hall ; to which the present inhabitant, a jolly, bustling, managing dame, of great activity and enterprise in her own peculiar line, has added the profitable occupation of a thriving and well-accustomed village-shop, contaminating the picturesque old-fashioned bay-window of the fancy letter-house, by the vulgarities of red-herrings, tobacco, onions, and salt-butter, a sight which must have made the projector of her elegant dwelling stare again,—and forcing her customers to climb up and down an ascent almost as steep as the roof of a house, whenever they wanted a pennyworth of needles, or a halfpennyworth of snuff, a toil whereat some of our poor old dames groaned aloud. Sir John threatened to turn her out, and her customers threatened to turn her off ; but neither of these events happened. Dinah Forde appeased her landlord and managed her customers : for Dinah Forde was a notable woman ; and it is really surprising what great things, in a small way, your notable women will compass.

Besides Mrs. Dinah Forde, and her apprentice, a girl of ten years old, the letter-house had lately acquired another occupant, in the shape of Dinah's tenant or lodger,—I don't know which word best expresses the nature of the arrangement,—my old friend, Sam Page, the Rat-catcher ; who, together with his implements of office, two ferrets, and four mongrels, inhabited a sort

of shed or outhouse at the back of the premises,—serving, “especially the curs,” as Mrs. Forde was wont to express herself, “as a sort of guard and protection to a lone woman’s property.”

Sam Page was, as I have said, an old acquaintance of ours, although neither as a resident of Aberleigh, nor in his capacity of rat-catcher, both of which were recent assumptions. It was, indeed, a novelty to see Sam Page as a resident any where. His abode seemed to be the highway. One should as soon have expected to find a gipsy within stone walls, as soon have looked for a hare in her last year’s form, or a bird in his old nest, as for Sam Page in the same place a month together : so completely did he belong to that order which the lawyers call *vagrants*, and the common people designate by the significant name of trampers ; and so entirely of all rovers did he seem the most roving, of all wanderers the most unsettled. The winds, the clouds, our English weather, were but a type of his mutability.

Our acquaintance with him had commenced above twenty years ago, when, a lad of some fifteen or there-away, he carried muffins and cakes about the country. The whole house was caught by his intelligence and animation, his light active figure, his keen grey eye, and the singular mixture of shrewdness and good-humour in his sharp but pleasant features. Nobody’s muffins could go down but Sam Page’s. We turned off our old



stupid deaf cakeman, Simon Browne, and appointed Sam on the instant. (Note this happened at the period of a general election, and Sam wore the right colour, and Simon the wrong.) Three times a week he was to call. Faithless wretch!—he never called again! He took to selling election ballads, and carrying about handbills. We waited for him a fortnight, went muffinless a whole fortnight; and then, our candidate being fairly elected, and blue and yellow returned to their original non-importance, were fain to put up once more with poor old deaf Simon Browne.

Sam's next appearance was in the character of a letter-boy, when he and a donkey set up a most spirited opposition to Thomas Hearne and the post-cart. Every body was dissatisfied with Thomas Hearne, who had committed more sins than I can remember, of forgetfulness, irregularity, and all manner of postman-like faults; and Sam, when applying for employers, made a most successful canvass, and for a week performed miracles of punctuality. At the end of that time he began to commit, with far greater vigour than his predecessor, Thomas Hearne, the several sins for which that worthy had been discarded. On Tuesday he forgot to call for the bag in the evening; on Wednesday he omitted to bring it in the morning; on Thursday he never made his appearance at all; on Friday his employers gave him warning; and on Saturday they turned him off. So ended this hopeful experiment.

Still, however, he continued to travel the country in various capacities. First, he carried a tray of casts ; then a basket of Staffordshire ware ; then he cried cherries ; then he joined a troop of ruddle-men, and came about redder than a red Indian ; then he sported a barrel-organ, a piece of mechanism of no small pretensions, having two sets of puppets on the top, one girls waltzing, the other soldiers at drill ; then he drove a knife-grinder's wheel ; then he led a bear and a very accomplished monkey ; then he escorted a celebrated company of dancing dogs ; and then, for a considerable time, during which he took a trip to India and back, we lost sight of him.

He reappeared, however, at B. Fair, where one year he was showman to the Living Skeleton, and the next a performer in the tragedy of the Edinburgh Murders, as exhibited every half-hour at the price of a penny to each person. Sam showed so much talent for melodrama, that we fully expected to find him following his new profession, which would have the advantage of the change of place and of character which his habits required ; and on his being again, for several months, an absentee, had little doubt but he had been promoted from a booth to a barn, and even began to look for his name amongst a party of five strollers, three men and two women, who issued play-bills at Aberleigh, and performed tragedy, comedy, opera, farce, and pantomime, with all the degrees

and compounds thereof described by Polonius, in the great room at the Rose, divided for the occasion into a row of chairs called the Boxes, at a shilling per seat, and two of benches called the Pit, at sixpence. I even suspected that a Mr. Theodore Fitzhugh, the genius of the company, might be Sam Page fresh christened. But I was mistaken. Sam, when I saw him again, and mentioned my suspicion, pleaded guilty to a turn for the drama; he confessed that he liked acting of all things, especially tragedy, "it was such fun." But there was a small obstacle to his pursuit of the histrionic art—the spoken drama: our poor friend could not read. To use his own words, "he was no scholar;" and, on recollecting certain small aberrations which had occurred during the three days that he carried the letter-bag, and professed to transact errands, such as the mis-delivery of notes, and the non-performance of written commissions, we were fain to conclude that, instead of having, as he expressed it, "somehow or other got rid of his learning," learning was a blessing which Sam had never possessed, and that a great luminary was lost to the stage simply from the accident of not knowing his alphabet.

Instead of being, as we had imagined, ranting in Richard, or raving in Lear, our unlucky hero had been amusing himself by making a voyage to the West Indies, and home by the way of America, having had some thoughts of honouring the New World by making it the

scene of his residence, or rather of his peregrinations ; and a country where the whole population seems moveable, would, probably, have suited him : but the yellow fever seized him, and pinned him fast at the very beginning of his North American travels ; and, sick and weary, he returned to England, determined, as he said, “ to take a room and live respectably.”

The apartment on which he fixed was, as I have intimated, an outhouse belonging to Mrs. Dinah Forde, in which he took up his abode the beginning of last summer, with his two ferrets, harmless, foreign-looking things, (no native English animal has so outlandish an appearance as the ferret, with its long limber body, its short legs, red eyes, and ermine-looking fur,) of whose venom, gentle as they looked, he was wont to boast amain ; four little dogs, of every variety of mongrel ugliness, whose eminence in the same quality nobody could doubt, for one had lost an eye in battle, and one an ear, the third halted in his fore quarters, and the fourth limped behind ; and a jay of great talent and beauty, who turned his pretty head this way and that, and bent and bowed most courteously when addressed, and then responded in words equally apt and courteous to all that was said to him. Mrs. Dinah Forde fell in love with that jay at first sight ; borrowed him of his master, and hung him at one side of her door, where he soon became as famous all through the parish as the talking



bird in the Arabian tales, or the parrot Vert-vert, immortalized by Gresset.

Sam's own appearance was as rat-catcher-like, I had almost said as venomous, as that of his retinue. His features sharper than ever, thin, and worn, and sallow, yet arch and good-humoured withal ; his keen eye and knowing smile, his pliant active figure, and the whole turn of his equipment, from the shabby straw hat to the equally shabby long gaiters, told his calling almost as plainly as the sharp heads of the ferrets, which were generally protruded from the pockets of his shabby jean jacket, or the bunch of dead rats with which he was wont to parade the streets of B. on a market-day. He seemed, at last, to have found his proper vocation ; and having stuck to it for four or five months, with great success and reputation, there seemed every chance of his becoming stationary at Aberleigh.

In his own profession his celebrity was, as I have said, deservedly great. The usual complaint against rat-catchers, that they take care not to ruin the stock, that they are sure to leave breeders enough, could not be applied to Sam ; who, poor fellow, never was suspected of forethought in his life ; and who, in this case, had evidently too much delight in the chase himself, to dream of checking or stopping it, whilst there was a rat left unslain. On the contrary, so strong was the feeling of his sportsmanship, and that of his poor curs, that one of



his grand operations, on the taking in of a wheat-rick, for instance, or the clearing out of a barn, was sure to be attended by all the idle boys and unemployed men in the village,—by all, in short, who, under the pretence of helping, could make an excuse to their wives, their consciences, or the parish-officers. The grand batteau, on emptying Farmer Brookes's great barn, will be long remembered in Aberleigh ; there was more noise made, and more beer drunk, than on any occasion since the happy marriage of Miss Phœbe and the patten-maker ; it even emulated the sports and the tipsiness of the B. election—and that's a bold word ! The rats killed were in proportion to the din—and that is a bold word too ! I am really afraid to name the number, it seemed to myself, and would appear to my readers, so incredible. Sam and Farmer Brookes were so proud of the achievement, that they hung the dead game on the lower branches of the great oak outside the gate, after the fashion practised by mole-catchers, to the unspeakable consternation of a cockney cousin of the good farmer's, a very fine lady, who had never in her life before been out of the sound of Bow bell, and who, happening to catch sight of this portentous crop of acorns in passing under the tree, caused her husband, who was driving her, to turn the gig round, and, notwithstanding remonstrance and persuasion, and a most faithful promise that the boughs should be dismantled before night, could not be induced to set foot

in a place where the trees were, to use her own words, "so heathenish," and betook herself back to her own domicile on Snow-hill, in great and evident perplexity as to the animal or vegetable quality of the oak in question.\*

Another cause of the large assemblage at Sam's rat-hunts was, besides the certainty of good sport, the eminent popularity of the leader of the chase. Sam was a universal favourite. He had good-fellowship enough to conciliate the dissipated, and yet stopped short of the license which would have disgusted the sober,—was pleasant-spoken, quick, lively, and intelligent,—sang a good song, told a good story, and had a kindness of temper, and a lightness of heart, which rendered him a most exhilarating and coveted companion to all in his own station. He was, moreover, a proficient in country games; and so eminent at cricket especially, that the men of Aberleigh were no sooner able, from his residence in the parish, to count him amongst their eleven, than they challenged their old rivals, the men of Hinton, and beat them forthwith.

\* Moles are generally, and rats occasionally, strung on willows when killed; not much to the improvement of the beauty of the scenery. I don't know any thing that astounds a Londoner more than the sight of a tree bearing such fruit. The plum-pudding tree, whereof mention is made in the pleasant and veracious travels of the Baron Munchausen, could not appear more completely a *lusus naturæ*.

Two nights before the return match, Sam, shabbier even than usual, and unusually out of spirits, made his appearance at the house of an old Aberleigh cricketer, still a patron and promoter of that noble game, and the following dialogue took place between them :

“ Well, Sam, we are to win this match ? ”

“ I hope so, please your honour. But I’m sorry to say I shan’t be at the winning of it.”

“ Not here, Sam ! What, after rattling the stumps about so gloriously last time, won’t you stay to finish them now ? Only think how those Hinton fellows will crow ! You must stay over Wednesday.”

“ I can’t, your honour. ’Tis not my fault. But, here, I’ve had a lawyer’s letter on the part of Mrs. Forde, about the trifle of rent, and a bill that I owe her ; and if I’m not off to-night, Heaven knows what she’ll do with me ! ”

“ The rent—that can’t be much. Let’s see if we can’t manage——”

“ Aye, but there’s a longish bill, sir,” interrupted Sam. “ Consider, we are seven in family.”

“ Seven ! ” interrupted, in his turn, the other interlocutor.

“ Aye, sir, counting the dogs and the ferrets, poor beasts ! for, I suppose, she has not charged for the jay’s board, though ’twas that unlucky bird made the mischief.”

“ The jay ! What could he have to do with the

matter ? Dinah used to be as fond of him as if he had been her own child ! and I always thought Dinah Forde a good-natured woman."

"So she is, in the main, your honour," replied Sam, twirling his hat, and looking half shy and half sly, at once knowing and ashamed. "So she is, in the main ; but this, somehow, is a particular sort of an affair. You must know, sir," continued Sam, gathering courage as he went on, "that at first the widow and I were very good friends, and several of these articles which are charged in the bill, such as milk for the ferrets, and tea and lump-sugar, and young onions for myself, I verily thought were meant as presents ; and so I do believe, at the time, she did mean them. But, howsoever, Jenny Dobbs, the nursery maid at the Hall (a pretty black-eyed lass, perhaps your honour may have noticed her walking with the children), she used to come out of an evening like to see us play cricket, and then she praised my bowling, and then I talked to her, and so at last we began to keep company ; and the jay, owing, I suppose, to hearing me say so sometimes, began to cry out ' Pretty Jenny Dobbs ! ' "

"Well, and this affronted the widow ? "

"Past all count, your honour. You never saw a woman in such a tantrum. She declared I had taught the bird to insult her, and posted off to Lawyer Latitat. And here I have got this letter threatening to turn me out, and put



me in gaol, and what not, from the lawyer ; and Jenny, a false-hearted jade, finding how badly matters are going with me, turns round and says, that she never meant to have me, and is going to marry the French valet, (Sir John's French valet,) a foreigner and a papist, who may have a dozen wives before for any thing she can tell. These women are enough to drive a man out of his senses ! ” And poor Sam gave his hat a mighty swing, and looked likely to cry from a mixture of grief, anger, and vexation. “ These women are enough to drive a man mad ! ” reiterated Sam, with increased energy.

“ So they are, Sam,” replied his host, administering a very efficient dose of consolation, in the shape of a large glass of Cognac brandy ; which, in spite of its coming from his rival's country, Sam swallowed with hearty good-will. “ So they are. But Jenny's not worth fretting about : she's a poor feckless thing after all, fitter for a Frenchman than an Englishman. If I were you, I would make up to the widow : she's a person of property, and a fine comely woman into the bargain. Make up to the widow, Sam ; and drink another glass of brandy to your success ! ”

And Sam followed both pieces of advice. He drank the brandy, and he made up to the widow, the former part of the prescription probably inspiring him with courage to attempt the latter ; and the lady was propitious, and the wedding speedy : and the last that I



heard of them was, the jay's publishing the banns of marriage, under a somewhat abridged form, from his cage at the door of Mrs. Dinah's shop, (a proceeding at which she seemed, outwardly, scandalised; but over which it may be suspected she chuckled inwardly, or why not have taken in the cage?) and the French valet's desertion of Jenny Dobbs, whom he, in his turn, jilted; and the dilemma of Lawyer Latitat, who found himself obliged to send in his bill for the threatening letter to the identical gentleman to whom it was addressed. For the rest, the cricket match was won triumphantly, the wedding went off with great *éclat*, and our accomplished rat-catcher is, we trust, permanently fixed in our good village of Aberleigh.

## THE BEAUTY OF THE VILLAGE

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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## THE BEAUTY OF THE VILLAGE

THREE years ago, Hannah Cordery was, beyond all manner of dispute, the prettiest girl in Aberleigh. It was a rare union of face, form, complexion and expression. Of that just height, which, although certainly tall, would yet hardly be called so, her figure united to its youthful roundness, and still more youthful lightness, an airy flexibility, a bounding grace, and when in repose, a gentle dignity, which alternately reminded one of a fawn bounding through the forest, or a swan at rest upon the lake. A sculptor would have modelled her for the youngest of the Graces; whilst a painter, caught by the bright colouring of that fair blooming face, the white forehead so vividly contrasted by the masses of dark curls, the jet-black eyebrows, and long rich eyelashes, which shaded her finely-cut grey eye, and the pearly teeth disclosed by the scarlet lips, whose every movement was an unconscious smile, would doubtless have selected her for the very goddess of youth. Beyond all question, Hannah Cordery, at eighteen, was the beauty of Aberleigh, and unfortunately no inhabitant of that populous

village was more thoroughly aware that she was so than the fair damsel herself.

Her late father, good Master Cordery, had been all his life a respectable and flourishing master bricklayer in the place. Many a man with less pretensions to the title would call himself a Builder nowadays, or "by'r lady," an Architect, and put forth a flaming card, vaunting his accomplishments in the mason's craft, his skill in plans and elevations, and his unparalleled dispatch and cheapness in carrying his designs into execution. But John Cordery was no new-fangled personage. A plain honest tradesman was our bricklayer, and thoroughly of the old school; one who did his duty to his employers with punctual industry; who was never above his calling; a good son, a good brother, a good husband, and an excellent father, who trained up a large family in the way they should go, and never entered a public house in his life.

The loss of this invaluable parent about three years before had been the only grief that Hannah Cordery had known. But as her father, although loving her with the mixture of pride and fondness, which her remarkable beauty, her delightful gaiety, and the accident of her being by many years the youngest of his children, rendered natural, if not excusable, had yet been the only one about her, who had discernment to perceive, and authority to check her little ebullitions of vanity and



self-will; she felt, as soon as the first natural tears were wiped away, that a restraint had been removed, and, scarcely knowing why, was too soon consoled for the greatest misfortune that could possibly have befallen one so dangerously gifted. Her mother was a kind, good, gentle woman, who having by necessity worked hard in the early part of her life, still continued the practice, partly from inclination, partly from a sense of duty, and partly from mere habit, and amongst her many excellent qualities had the Alie Dinmont propensity of giving all her children their own way,\* especially this the blooming cadette of the family; and her eldest brother, a bachelor, who, succeeding to his father's business, took his place as master of the house, retaining his surviving parent as its mistress, and his pretty sister as something between a plaything and a pet, both in their several ways seemed vying with each other as to which should most thoroughly humour and indulge the lovely creature whom nature had already done her best or her worst to spoil to their hands.

Her other brothers and sisters, married and dispersed over the country, had of course no authority, even if

\* "Eh, poor things, what else have I to give them?" This reply of Alie Dinmont, and indeed her whole sweet character, short though it be, has always seemed to me the finest female sketch in the Waverley Novels—finer even, because so much tenderer, than the bold and honest Jeanie Deans.

they had wished to assume any thing like power over the graceful and charming young woman whom every one belonging to her felt to be an object of pride and delight ; so that their presents and caresses and smiling invitations aided in strengthening Hannah's impression, poor girl though she were, that her little world, the small horizon of her own secluded hamlet, was made for her, and for her only ; and if this persuasion had needed any additional confirmation, such confirmation would have been found in the universal admiration of the village beaux, and the envy, almost as general, of the village belles, particularly in the latter ; the envy of rival beauties being, as every body knows, of all flatteries the most piquant and seducing—in a word the most genuine and real.

The only person from whom Hannah Cordery ever heard that rare thing called truth, was her friend and school-fellow, Lucy Meadows, a young woman two or three years older than herself in actual age, and half a lifetime more advanced in the best fruits of mature age, in clearness of judgment and steadiness of conduct.

A greater contrast of manner and character than that exhibited between the light-headed and light-hearted beauty and her mild and quiet companion could hardly be imagined. Lucy was pretty too, very pretty ; but it was the calm, sedate, composed expression, the pure alabaster complexion, the soft dove-like eye, the general

harmony and delicacy of feature and of form that we so often observe in a female *Friend*; and her low gentle voice, her retiring deportment, and quaker-like simplicity of dress were in perfect accordance with that impression. Her clearness of intellect, too, and rectitude of understanding, were such as are often found amongst that intelligent race of people; although there was an intuitive perception of character and motive, a fineness of observation under that demure and modest exterior, that, if Lucy had ever in her life been ten miles from her native village, might have been called knowledge of the world.

How she came by this quality, which some women seem to possess by instinct, Heaven only knows! Her early gravity of manner, and sedateness of mind might be more easily accounted for. Poor Lucy was an orphan, and had from the age of fourteen been called upon to keep house for her only brother, a young man of seven or eight-and-twenty, well-to-do in the world, who, as the principal carpenter of Aberleigh, had had much intercourse with the Corderys in the way of business, and was on the most friendly terms with the whole family.

With one branch of that family James Meadows would fain have been upon terms nearer and dearer than those of friendship. Even before John Cordery's death, his love for Hannah, although not openly avowed, had been the object of remark to the whole village; and it is

certain that the fond and anxious father found his last moments soothed by the hope that the happiness and prosperity of his favourite child were secured by the attachment of one so excellent in character and respectable in situation.

James Meadows was indeed a man to whom any father would have confided his dearest and loveliest daughter with untroubled confidence. He joined to the calm good sense and quiet observation that distinguished his sister, an inventive and constructive power, which, turned as it was to the purposes of his own trade, rendered him a most ingenious and dexterous mechanic; and which only needed the spur of emulation, or the still more active stimulus of personal ambition, to procure for him high distinction in any line to which his extraordinary faculty of invention and combination might be applied.

Ambition, however, he had none. He was happily quite free from that tormenting task-master, who, next perhaps to praise, makes the severest demand on human faculty and human labour. To maintain in the spot where he was born the character for honesty, independence and industry that his father had borne before him, to support in credit and comfort the sister whom he loved so well, and one whom he loved still better, formed the safe and humble boundary of his wishes. But with the contrariety with which fortune so often seems to pursue those who do not follow her, his successes far outstripped



his moderate desires. The neighbouring gentlemen soon discovered his talent. Employment poured in upon him. His taste proved to be equal to his skill ; and from the ornamental out-door work—the Swiss cottages and fancy dairies, the treillage and the rustic seats belonging to a great country place—to the most delicate mouldings of the boudoir and the saloon, nothing went well that wanted the guiding eye and finishing hand of James Meadows. The best workmen were proud to be employed by him ; the most respectable yeomen offered their sons as his apprentices ; and without any such design on his part, our village carpenter was in a fair way to become one of the wealthiest tradesmen in the county.

His personal character and peculiarly modest and respectful manners contributed not a little to his popularity with his superiors. He was a fair, slender young man, with a pale complexion, a composed but expressive countenance, a thoughtful, deep-set, grey eye, and a remarkably fine head, with a profusion of curling brown hair, which gave a distinguished air to his whole appearance ; so that he was constantly taken by strangers for a gentleman ; and the gentle propriety with which he was accustomed to correct the mistake was such as seldom failed to heighten the estimation of the individual, whilst it set them right as to his station. Hannah Cordery, with all her youthful charms, might think herself a lucky damsel in securing the affections of such a lover as this ;



and that she did actually think so was the persuasion of those that knew her best—of her mother, her brother William, and Lucy Meadows ; although the coy, fantastic beauty, shy as a ring-dove, wild as a fawn of the forest, was so far from confessing any return of affection, that whilst suffering his attentions, and accepting his escort to the rural gaieties which beseeemed her age, she would now profess, even while hanging on his arm, her intention of never marrying, and now coquet before his eyes with some passing admirer whom she had never seen before. She took good care, however, not to go too far in her coquetry, or to flirt twice with the same person ; and so contrived to temper her resolutions against matrimony with “ nods and becks and wreathed smiles,” that, modest as he was by nature, and that natural modesty enhanced by the diffidence which belongs to a deep and ardent passion, James Meadows himself saw no real cause for fear in the pretty petulance of his fair mistress, in a love of power so full of playful grace that it seemed rather a charm than a fault, and in a blushing reluctance to change her maiden state, and lose her maiden freedom, which had in his eyes all the attractions of youthful shamefacedness. That she would eventually be his own dear wife, James entertained no manner of doubt ; and, pleased with all that pleased her, was not unwilling to prolong the happy days of courtship.

In this humour Lucy had left him, when, in the end

of May, she had gone for the first time to pass a few weeks with a relation in London. Her cousins were kind and wealthy ; and, much pleased with the modest intelligence of their young kinswoman, they exerted themselves to render their house agreeable to her, and to show her the innumerable sights of the Queen of Cities. So that her stay being urged by James, who, thoroughly unselfish, rejoiced to find his sister so well amused, was prolonged to the end of July, when, alarmed at the total cessation of letters from Hannah, and at the constrained and dispirited tone which she discovered, or fancied that she discovered in her brother's, Lucy resolved to hasten home.

He received her with his usual gentle kindness and his sweet and thoughtful smile ; assured her that he was well ; exerted himself more than usual to talk, and waved away her anxious questions by extorting from her an account of her journey and her residence, of all that she had seen, and of her own feelings on returning to her country home after so long a sojourn in the splendid and beautiful metropolis. He talked more than was usual with him, and more gaily ; but still Lucy was dissatisfied. The hand that had pressed hers on alighting was cold as death ; the lip that had kissed her fair brow was pale and trembling ; his appetite was gone, and his frequent and apparently unconscious habit of pushing away the clustering curls from his forehead proved, as

plainly as words could have done, that there was pain in the throbbing temples. The pulsation was even visible ; but still he denied that he was ill, and declared that her notion of his having grown thin and pale was nothing but a woman's fancy—the fond whim of a fond sister.

To escape from the subject he took her into the garden—her own pretty flower garden, divided by a wall covered with creepers from the larger plot of ground devoted to vegetables, and bounded on one side by buildings connected with his trade, and parted on the other from a well stored timber-yard, by a beautiful rustic skreen of fir and oak and birch with the bark on, which, terminating in a graceful curve at the end next the house, and at that leading to the garden with a projecting gothic porch, partly covered by climbing plants, partly broken by tall pyramidal hollyhocks and magnificent dahlias, and backed by a clump of tall elms, formed a most graceful veil to an unsightly object. This skreen had been erected during Lucy's absence, and without her knowledge ; and her brother, smiling at the delight which she expressed, pointed out to her the splendid beauty of her flowers and the luxuriant profusion of their growth.

The old buildings matted with roses, honeysuckles, and jessamines, broken only by the pretty out-door room which Lucy called her green-house, the pile of variously

tinted geraniums in front of that prettiest room ; the wall garlanded, covered, hidden with interwoven myrtles, fuchsias, passion-flowers, and clematis, the purple wreaths of the mauradia, the orange tubes of the *acrima carpia*, and the bright pink blossoms of the lotus spermum ; the beds filled with dahlias, salvias, calceolarias, and carnations of every hue, with the rich purple and the pure white petunia, with the many-coloured marvel of Peru, with the enamelled blue of the Siberian larkspur, with the richly scented changeable lupine, with the glowing lavatera, the splendid hybiscus, the pure and alabaster cup of the white *cœnothera*, the lilac clusters of the phlox, and the delicate blossom of the yellow sultan, most elegant amongst flowers ;—all these, with a hundred other plants too long to name, and all their various greens, and the pet weed mignonette growing like grass in a meadow, and mingling its aromatic odour amongst the general fragrance—all this sweetness and beauty glowing in the evening sun, and breathing of freshness and of cool air, came with such a thrill of delight upon the poor village maiden, who, in spite of her admiration of London, had languished in its heat and noise and dirt, for the calm and quiet, the green leaves and the bright flowers of her country home, that, from the very fulness of her heart, from joy and gratitude and tenderness and anxiety, she flung her arms round her brother's neck and burst into tears.



Lucy was usually so calm and self-commanded, that such an ebullition of feeling from her astonished and affected James Meadows more than any words, however tender. He pressed her to his heart, and when following up the train of her own thoughts—sure that this kind brother, who had done so much to please her, was himself unhappy, guessing, and longing, and yet fearing to know the cause—when Lucy, agitated by such feelings, ventured to whisper “Hannah?” her brother, placing her gently on the steps leading to the green-house, and leaning himself against the open door, began in a low and subdued tone to pour out his whole heart to his sympathising auditress. The story was nearly such as she had been led to expect from the silence of one party, and the distress of the other. A rival—a most unworthy rival—had appeared upon the scene, and James Meadows, besides the fear of losing the lovely creature whom he had loved so fondly, had the additional grief of believing that the man whose flatteries had at least gained from her a flattering hearing, was of all others the least likely to make her respectable and happy.—Much misery may be comprised in few words. Poor James’s story was soon told.

A young and gay Baronet had, as Lucy knew, taken the manor-house and manor of Aberleigh; and during her absence, a part of his retinue, with a train of dogs and horses, had established themselves in the mansion, in preparation for their master’s arrival. Amongst these



new comers, by far the most showy and important was the head keeper, Edward Forester, a fine-looking young man, with a tall, firm, upright figure, a clear dark complexion, bright black eyes, a smile alternately winning and scornful, and a prodigious fluency of speech, and readiness of compliment. He fell in love with Hannah at first sight, and declared his passion the same afternoon ; and, although discouraged by every one about her, never failed to parade before her mother's house two or three times a-day, mounted on his master's superb blood horse, to waylay her in her walks, and to come across her in her visits. Go where she might, Hannah was sure to encounter Edward Forester ; and this devotion from one whose personal attractions extorted as much admiration from the lasses, her companions, as she herself had been used to excite amongst the country lads, had in it, in spite of its ostentatious openness, a flattery that seemed irresistible.

“ I do not think she loves him, Lucy,” said James Meadows, sighingly ; “ indeed I am sure that she does not. She is dazzled by his showiness and his fluency, his horsemanship and his dancing, but love him she does not. It is fascination, such a fascination as leads a moth to flutter round a candle, or a bird to drop into the rattlesnake's mouth—and never was flame more dangerous, or serpent more deadly. He is unworthy of her, Lucy—thoroughly unworthy. This man, who calls

himself devoted to a creature as innocent as she is lovely—who pretends to feel a pure and genuine passion for this pure and too-believing girl, passes his evenings, his nights, in drinking, in gaming, in debauchery of the lowest and most degrading nature. He is doubtless at this very instant at the wretched beer-shop at the corner of the common—the haunt of all that is wicked, and corrupter of all that is frail—the *Foaming Tankard*. It is there, in the noble game of four-corners, that the man who aspires to the love of Hannah Cordery passes his hours—Lucy, do you remember the exquisite story of Phœbe Dawson, in Crabbe's Parish Register?—such as she was, will Hannah be. I could resign her, Heaven knows, grievous as the loss would be, to one whom she loved, and who would ensure her happiness. But to give her up to Edward Forester—the very thought is madness!”

“Surely, brother, she cannot know that he is so unworthy! surely, surely, when she is convinced that he is, she will throw him off like an infected garment! I know Hannah well. She would be protected from such an one as you describe, as well by pride as by purity. She cannot be aware of these propensities.”

“She has been told of them repeatedly; but he denies the accusation, and she rather believes his denial than the assertions of her best friends. Knowing Hannah as you do, Lucy, you cannot but remember the petulant self-will, the scorn of contradiction and opposition, which

used half to vex and half to amuse us in the charming spoilt child. We little dreamt how dangerous that fault, almost diverting in trifles, might become in the serious business of life. Her mother and brother are my warm advocates, and the determined opponents of my rival ; and therefore, to assert what she calls her independence and her disinterestedness, (for with this sweet perverse creature the worldly prosperity which I valued chiefly for her sake makes against me,) she will fling herself away on one wholly unworthy of her, one whom she does not even love, and with whom her whole life will be a scene of degradation and misery."

"He will be to-night at the *Foaming Tankard* ?"

"He is there every night."

At this point of their conversation the brother was called away ; and Lucy, after a little consideration, tied on her bonnet, and walked to Mrs. Cordery's.

Her welcome from William Cordery and his mother was as cordial and hearty as ever, perhaps more so ; Hannah's greetings were affectionate, but constrained. Not to receive Lucy kindly, was impossible ; and yet her own internal consciousness rendered poor Lucy, next perhaps to her brother, the very last person whom she would have desired to see ; and this uncomfortable feeling increased to a painful degree, when the fond sister, with some diminution of her customary gentleness, spoke to her openly of her conduct to James, and repeated in

terms of strong and earnest reprehension, all that she had heard of the conduct and pursuits of her new admirer.

“He frequent the *Foaming Tankard*! He drink to intoxication! He play for days and nights at four-corners! It is false! It is a vile slander! I would answer for it with my life! He told me this very day that he has never even entered that den of infamy.”

“I believe him to be there at this very hour,” replied Lucy calmly. And Hannah, excited to the highest point of anger and agitation, dared Lucy to the instant proof, invited her to go with her at once to the beer-house, and offered to abandon all thoughts of Edward Forester if he proved to be there. Lucy, willing enough to place the fate of the cause on that issue, prepared to accompany her; and the two girls set forth, wholly regardless of Mrs. Cordery’s terrified remonstrance, who assured them that small-pox of the confluent sort was in the house; and that she had heard only that very afternoon, that a young woman, vaccinated at the same time, and by the same person with her Hannah, lay dead in one of the rooms of the *Foaming Tankard*.

Not listening to, not even hearing her mother, Hannah walked with the desperate speed of passion through the village street, up the winding hill, across the common, along the avenue; and reached in less time than seemed possible the open grove of oaks, in one corner of which this obnoxious beer-house, the torment and puzzle of

the magistrates, and the pest of the parish, was situated. There was no sign of death or sickness about the place. The lights from the tap-room and the garden, along one side of which the alley for four-corners was erected, gleamed in the darkness of a moonless summer night between the trees ; and even farther than the streaming light, pierced the loud oaths and louder laughter, the shouts of triumph, and the yells of defeat, mixed with the dull heavy blows of the large wooden bowl, from the drunken gamesters in the alley.

Hannah started as she heard one voice ; but, determined to proceed, she passed straight through the garden gate, and rushed hastily on to the open shed where the players were assembled. There, stripped of his coat and waistcoat, in all the agony of an intoxicated and losing gambler, stood Edward Forester, in the act of staking his gold-laced hat upon the next cast. He threw and lost ; and casting from him with a furious oath the massive wooden ball, struck, in his blind frenzy, the lovely creature who stood in silent horror at the side of the alley, who fell with the blow, and was carried for dead into the *Foaming Tankard*.

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Hannah did not, however, die ; although her left arm was broken, her shoulder dislocated, and much injury



inflicted by the fall. She lived, and she still lives, but no longer as the Beauty of the Village. Her fine shape injured by the blow, and her fair face disfigured by the small-pox, she can no longer boast the surpassing loveliness which obtained for her the title of the Rose of Aberleigh. And yet she has gained more than she has lost, even in mere attraction ; the vain coquettish girl is become a sweet and gentle woman ; gaiety has been replaced by sensibility, and the sauciness of conscious power, by the modest wish to please. In her long and dangerous illness, her slow and doubtful convalescence, Hannah learnt the difficult lesson, to acknowledge and to amend her own faults ; and when, after many scruples on the score of her changed person and impaired health, she became the happy wife of James Meadows, she brought to him, in a corrected temper and a purified heart, a dowry far more precious in his mind than the transient beauty which had been her only charm in the eyes of Edward Forester.

## MATCH-MAKING



## MATCH-MAKING

MANY years ago, a family of the name of Leslie came to reside in a thickly peopled country neighbourhood, about forty miles from the metropolis; and being persons thoroughly *comme il faut*, who had taken, on a long lease, the commodious and creditable mansion called Hallenden Hall, with its large park-like paddock, its gardens, green-houses, conservatories, and so forth,—and who evidently intended to live in a style suited to their habitation,—were immediately visited by the inmates of all the courts, manors, parks, places, lodges, and castles within reach.

Mr. Leslie was, as was soon discovered, a man of ancient family and good estate, who had left his own county on the loss of a contested election, or some such cause of disgust, and had passed the last few years in London for the education of his daughters. He was also that exceedingly acceptable and somewhat rare thing, a lively, talking, agreeable man, very clever, and a little quaint, and making his conversation tell as much by a certain off-handedness of phrase and manner, as by the shrewdness of his observations, and his extensive knowledge of

the world. He had also, besides his pleasantry and good humour, another prime requisite for country popularity : although greatly above the general run of his neighbours in intellect, he much resembled them in his tastes ;—loved shooting, fishing, and hunting in the morning ; liked good dinners, good wine, and a snug rubber at night ; farmed with rather less loss of money than usually befalls a gentleman ; was a staunch partizan at vestries and turn-pike meetings ; a keen politician at the reading-room and the club ; frequented races and coursing meetings ; had a fancy for the more business-like gaieties of quarter sessions and grand juries ; accepted a lieutenancy in the troop of yeomanry cavalry, and actually served as churchwarden during the second year of his residence in the parish. At a word, he was an active, stirring, bustling personage, whose life of mind and thorough unaffectedness made him universally acceptable to rich and poor. At first sight there was a homeliness about him, a carelessness of appearance and absence of pretension, which rather troubled his more aristocratic compeers ; but the gentleman was so evident in all that he said or did, in tone and accent, act and word, that his little peculiarities were speedily forgotten, or only remembered to make him still more cordially liked.

If Mr. Leslie erred on the side of unpretendingness, his wife took good care not to follow his example : she had pretensions enough of all sorts to have set up twenty



fine ladies out of her mere superfluity. The niece of an Irish baron, and the sister of a Scotch countess—she fairly wearied all her acquaintance with the titles of her relatives. “My uncle, Lord Linton—my brother-in-law, the Earl of Paisley,” and all the lady Lucys, lady Elizabeths, lady Janes, and lady Marys of the one noble house, and the honourable masters and misses of the other, were twanged in the ears of her husband, children, servants, and visitors, every day and all day long. She could not say that the weather was fine without quoting my lord, or order dinner without referring to my lady. This peculiarity was the pleasure, the amusement of her life. Its business was to display, and if possible to marry her daughters; and I think she cherished her grand connexions the more, as being, in some sort, implements or accessories in her designs upon rich bachelors; for, greatly as she idolized rank in her own family, she had seen too much of its disadvantages when allied with poverty, not to give a strong preference to wealth in the grand pursuit of husband-hunting. She would, to be sure, have had no objection to an affluent peer for a son-in-law, had such a thing offered; but as the commodity, not too common any where, was particularly scarce in our county, she wisely addressed herself to the higher order of country squires, men of acres who inherited large territories and fine places, or men of money who came by purchase into similar possessions, and their immediate heirs, leaving

the younger brothers of the nobility, in common with all other younger brothers, unsought and uncared for.

Except in the grand matters of pedigrees and match-making, my good friend Mrs. Leslie was a sufficiently common person ; rather vulgar and dowdy in the morning, when, like many country gentlewomen of her age and class, she made amends for unnecessary finery by more unnecessary stinginess, and trotted about the place in an old brown stuff gown, much resembling the garment called a Joseph, worn by our great-grandmothers, surmounted by a weather-beaten straw-bonnet, and a sun-burnt bay-wig ; and particularly stately in an evening, when silks and satins made after the newest fashion, caps radiant with flowers, hats waving with feathers, chandelier ear-rings, and an ermine-lined cloak, the costly gift of a diplomatic relation—"My cousin, the envoy," rivalled in her talk even "my sister the countess")—converted her at a stroke into a chaperon of the very first water.

Her daughters, Barbara and Annabella, were pretty girls enough, and would probably have been far prettier had Nature, in their case, only been allowed fair play. As it was, they had been laced and braced, and drilled and starved, and kept from the touch of sun or air, or fire, until they had become too slender, too upright, too delicate, both in figure and complexion. To my eye they always looked as if they were intended to have

been plumper and taller, with more colour in their cheeks, more spring and vigour in their motions, more of health and life about them, poor things ! Nevertheless, they were prettyish girls, with fine hair, fine eyes, fine teeth, and an expression of native good-humour, which, by great luck, their preposterous education had not been able to eradicate.

Certainly, if an injudicious education could have spoilt young persons naturally well tempered and well disposed, these poor girls would have sunk under its evil influence. From seven years old to seventeen, they had been trained for display and for conquest, and could have played without ear, sung without voice, and drawn without eye, against any misses of their inches in the county. Never were accomplishments more thoroughly travestied. Barbara, besides the usual young-lady-iniquities of the organ, the piano, the harp, and the guitar, distended her little cheeks like a trumpeter, by blowing the flute and the flageolet ; whilst her sister, who had not breath for the wind instruments, encroached in a different way on the musical prerogative of man, by playing most outrageously on the fiddle—a female Paganini !

They painted in all sorts of styles, from “the human face divine,” in oils, crayons, and miniatures, down to birds and butterflies, so that the whole house was a series of exhibition rooms ; the walls were hung with

their figures and landscapes, the tables covered with their sketches ; you sate upon their performances in the shape of chair cushions, and trod on them in the form of ottomans. A family likeness reigned throughout these productions. Various in style, but alike in badness, all were distinguished by the same uniform unsucccess. Nor did they confine their attempts to the fine arts. There was no end to their misdoings. They japanned boxes, embroidered work-bags, gilded picture-frames, constructed pincushions, bound books, and made shoes. For universality the admirable Crichton was a joke to them. There was nothing in which they had not failed.

During one winter (and winter is the season of a country belle) Mrs. Leslie traded upon her daughter's accomplishments. Every morning visit was an exhibition, every dinner party a concert, and the unlucky assistants looked, listened, yawned, and lied, and got away as soon as possible, according to the most approved fashion in such cases. Half-a-year's experience, however, convinced the prudent mamma, that acquirements alone would not suffice for her purpose ; and having obtained for the Miss Leslies the desirable reputation of being the most accomplished young ladies in the neighbourhood, she relinquished the proud but unprofitable pleasure of exhibition, and wisely addressed herself to the more hopeful task of humouring the fancies and flattering the vanity of others.



In this pursuit she displayed a degree of zeal, perseverance, and resource, worthy of a better cause. Not a bachelor of fortune within twenty miles, but Mrs. Leslie took care to be informed of his tastes and habits, and to offer one or other of her fair nymphs to his notice, after the manner most likely to attract his attention and fall in with his ways. Thus for a whole season, Bab (in spite of the danger to her complexion) hunted with the Copley hounds, riding and fencing to admiration, not in chase of the fox, poor girl, for which she cared as little as any she in Christendom, but to catch, if it might be, that eminent and wealthy Nimrod, Sir Thomas Copley,—who, after all, governed by that law of contrast, which so often presides over the connubial destiny, married a town beauty, who never mounted a horse in her life, and would have fainted at the notion of leaping a five-barred gate; whilst Annabella, with equal disregard to her looks, was set to feed poultry, milk cows, make butter, and walk over ploughed fields with Squire Thornley, an agriculturist of the old school, who declared that his wife should understand the conduct of a farm, as well as of a house,—and followed up his maxim by marrying his dairy-maid. They studied mathematics to please a Cambridge scholar, and made verses for a literary lord; taught Sunday schools, and attended missionary meetings for the serious; and frequented balls, concerts, archery clubs, and water-parties for the



gay ; were every thing to every body, seen everywhere, known to every one ; and yet at the end of three years were, in spite of jaunts to Brighton, Cheltenham, and London, a trip to Paris, and a tour through Switzerland, just as likely to remain the two accomplished Miss Leslies as ever they had been. To “wither on the virgin stalk,” seemed their destiny.

How this happened is difficult to tell. The provoked mother laid the fault partly on the inertness of her husband, who, to say truth, had watched her manœuvres with some amusement, but without using the slightest means to assist her schemes ; partly on the refractoriness of her son and heir, a young gentleman, who, although sent first to Eton, most aristocratic of public schools, and then to Christchurch, most lordly of colleges, with the especial maternal injunction to form good connexions, so that he might pick up an heiress for himself and men of fortune for his sister, had, with unexampled perversity, cultivated the friendship of the clever, the entertaining, and the poor, and was now on the point of leaving Oxford without having made a single acquaintance worth knowing. “This, this was the unkindest cut of all ;” for Richard, a lad of good person and lively parts, had always been in her secret soul his mother’s favourite ; and now, to find him turn round on her and join his father in laying the blame of her several defeats on her own bad generalship and want of art to conceal her

designs, was really too vexatious, especially as Barbara and Annabella, who had hitherto been patterns of filial obedience, entering blindly into all her objects and doing their best to bring them to bear, now began to shew symptoms of being ashamed of the unmaidenly forwardness into which they had been betrayed, and even to form a resolution (especially Barbara, who had more of her father's and brother's sense than the good-natured but simple Annabella) not to join in such manœuvring again. "It cannot be right in me, mamma," said she one day, "to practise pistol-shooting with Mr. Greville, when no other lady does so ; and, therefore, if you please, I shall not go—I am sure you cannot wish me to do any thing not right."

"Particularly as there's no use in it," added Richard ; "fire as often as you may, you'll never hit that mark."

And Mr. Greville and the pistol-shooting were given up ; and Mrs. Leslie felt her authority shaken.

Affairs were in this posture, when the arrival of a visitor after her own heart—young, rich, unmarried, and a baronet—renewed the hopes of our match-maker.

For some months they had had at Hallenden Hall a very undistinguished, but in my mind a very amiable inmate, Mary Morland, the only daughter of Mr. Leslie's only sister, who, her parents being dead, and herself and her brother left in indigent circumstances, had accepted her uncle's invitation to reside in his family

as long as it suited her convenience, and was now on the point of departing to keep her brother's house,—a young clergyman recently ordained, who intended to eke out the scanty income of his curacy by taking pupils, for which arduous office he was eminently qualified by his excellent private character and high scholastic attainments.

William Morland was now come to carry his sister to their distant home; for they were of the “north countrie,” and his curacy was situate in far Northumberland. He was accompanied by an old school-fellow and intimate friend, in whose carriage Mary and himself were to perform their long journey; and it was on this kind companion, rich and young, a baronet and a bachelor, that Mrs. Leslie at once set her heart for a son-in-law.

Her manœuvres began the very evening of his arrival. She had been kind to Miss Morland from the moment she ascertained that she was a plain though lady-like woman of six-and-twenty, wholly unaccomplished in her sense of the word, and altogether the most unlikely person in the world to rival her two belles. She had been always kind to “poor dear Mary,” as she called her; but as soon as she beheld Sir Arthur Selby, she became the very fondest of aunts, insisted that Barbara should furnish her wardrobe, and Annabella take her portrait, and that the whole party should stay until these operations were satisfactorily concluded.

Sir Arthur, who seemed to entertain a great regard and affection for his two friends—who, the only children of the clergyman of the parish, had been his old companions and playmates at the manor-house, and from whom he had been parted during a long tour in Greece, Italy, and Spain,—consented with a very good grace to this arrangement ; the more so, as, himself a lively and clever man, he perceived, apparently with great amusement, the designs of his hostess, and for the first two or three days humoured them with much drollery ; affecting to be an epicure, that she might pass off her cook's excellent confectionery for Miss Annabella's handy-work, and even pretending to have sprained his ankle, that he might divert himself by observing in how many ways the same fair lady—who, something younger, rather prettier, and far more docile than her sister, had been selected by Mrs. Leslie for his intended bride—would be pressed by that accomplished match-maker into his service ; handing him his coffee, for instance, fetching him books and newspapers, offering him her arm when he rose from the sofa, following him about with footstools, cushions, and ottomans, and waiting on him just like a valet or a page in female attire.

At the end of that period—from some unexplained change of feeling, whether respect for his friend, William Morland, or weariness of acting a part so unsuited to him, or some relenting in favour of the young lady—he



threw off at once his lameness and his affectation, and resumed his own singularly natural and delightful manner. I saw a great deal of him, for my father's family and the Selbys had intermarried once or twice in every century since the Conquest ; and though it might have puzzled a genealogist to decide how near or how distant was the relationship, yet, as amongst north-country-folk, " blood is warmer than water," we continued not only to call cousins, but to entertain much of the kindly feeling by which family connexion often is, and always should be, accompanied. My father and Mr. Leslie had always been intimate, and Mary Morland and myself having taken a strong liking to each other, we met at one house or the other almost every day ; and, accustomed, as I was, to watch the progress of Mrs. Leslie's manœuvres, the rise, decline, and fall of her several schemes, I soon perceived that her hopes and plans were in full activity on the present occasion.

It was, indeed, perfectly evident, that she expected to hail Annabella as Lady Selby before many months were past ; and she had more reason for the belief than had often happened to her, inasmuch as Sir Arthur not only yielded with the best possible grace to her repeated entreaties for the postponement of his journey, but actually paid the young lady considerable attention, watching the progress of her portrait of Miss Morland, and aiding her not only by advice but assistance, to the



unspeakable benefit of the painting, and even carrying his complaisance so far as to ask her to sing every evening,—he being the very first person who had ever voluntarily caused the issue of those notes, which more resembled the screaming of a macaw than the tones of a human being. To be sure, he did not listen,—that would have been too much to expect from mortal; but he not only regularly requested her to sing, but took care, by suggesting single songs, to prevent her sister from singing with her,—who, thus left to her own devices, used to sit in a corner listening to William Morland, with a sincerity and earnestness of attention, very different from the make-believe admiration which she had been used to shew by her mamma's orders to the clever men of fortune whom she had been put forward to attract. That Mrs. Leslie did not see what was going forward in that quarter was marvellous; but her whole soul was engrossed by the desire to clutch Sir Arthur, and so long as he called on Annabella for bravura after bravura, she was happy.

Mr. Leslie, usually wholly inattentive to such proceedings, was on this occasion more clear-sighted. He asked Mary Morland one day whether she knew what her brother and Sir Arthur were about? and, on her blushing and hesitating in a manner very unusual with her, added, chucking her under the chin, “a word to the wise is enough, my queen: I am not quite a fool,

whatever your aunt may be, and so you may tell the young gentlemen ;” and with that speech he walked off.

The next morning brought a still fuller declaration of his sentiments. Sir Arthur had received by post a letter, which had evidently affected him greatly, and had handed it to William Morland, who had read it with equal emotion, but neither of them had mentioned its contents, or alluded to it in any manner. After breakfast, the young men walked off together, and the girls separated to their different employments. I, who had arrived there to spend the day, was about to join them, when I was stopped by Mr. Leslie. “ I want to speak to you,” said he, “ about that cousin of yours. My wife thinks he’s going to marry Bella, whereas it’s plain to me, as doubtless it must be to you, that whatever attention he may be paying to that simple child—and, for my own part, I don’t see that he *is* paying her any—is merely to cover William Morland’s attachment to Bab. So that the end of Mrs. Leslie’s wise schemes will be to have one daughter the wife of a country curate——”

“ A country curate, Mr. Leslie ! ” ejaculated Mrs. Leslie, holding up her hands in amazement and horror.

“ And the other,” pursued Mr. Leslie, “ an old maid.”

“ An old maid ! ” reiterated Mrs. Leslie, in additional dismay—“ an old maid ! ” Her very wig stood on end ;

and what further she would have said was interrupted by the entrance of the accused party.

"I am come, Mr. Leslie," said Sir Arthur—"do not move, Mrs. Leslie—pray stay, my dear cousin—I am come to present to you a double petition. The letter which I received this morning was, like most human events, of mingled yarn—it brought intelligence of good and of evil. I have lost an old and excellent friend, the rector of Hadley-cum-Appleton, and have, by that loss, an excellent living to present to my friend William Morland. It is above fifteen hundred a year, with a large house, a fine garden, and a park-like glebe, altogether a residence fit for any lady; and it comes at a moment in which such a piece of preferment is doubly welcome, since the first part of my petition relates to him. Hear it favourably, my dear sir—my dear madam: he loves your Barbara, and Barbara, I hope and believe, loves him."

"There, Mrs. Leslie!" interrupted Mr. Leslie, with an arch nod. "There! do you hear that?"

"You are both favourably disposed, I am sure," resumed Sir Arthur. "Such a son-in-law must be an honour to any man—must he not, my dear madam?—and I, for my part, have a brother's interest in his suit."

"There, Mr. Leslie!" ejaculated, in her turn, Mrs. Leslie, returning her husband's nod most triumphantly. "A brother's interest! Do you hear that?"

“Since,” pursued Sir Arthur, “I have to crave your intercession with his dear and admirable sister, whom I have loved, without knowing it, ever since we were children in the nursery, and who now, although confessing that she does not hate me, talks of want of fortune, as if I had not enough, and of want of beauty and of accomplishments, as if her matchless elegance and unrivalled conversation were not worth all the doll-like prettiness of tinsel acquirements under the sun. Pray intercede for me, dear cousin!—dear sir!” continued the ardent lover; whilst Mr. Leslie, without taking the slightest notice of the appeal, nodded most provokingly to the crest-fallen match-maker, and begged to know how she liked Sir Arthur’s opinion of her system of education?

What answer the lady made, this deponent saith not—indeed, I believe she was too angry to speak—but the result was all that could be desired by the young people; the journey was again postponed; the double marriage celebrated at Hallenden; and Miss Annabella, as bridesmaid, accompanied the fair brides to “canny Northumberland,” to take her chance for a husband amongst “fresh fields and pastures new.”

## THE CARPENTER'S DAUGHTER



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## THE CARPENTER'S DAUGHTER

Of all living objects, children, out of doors, seem to me the most interesting to a lover of nature. In a room, I may, perhaps, be allowed to exercise my privilege as an old maid, by confessing that they are in my eyes less engaging. If well-behaved, the poor little things seem constrained and *gênés*—if ill-conducted, the *gêné* is transferred to the unfortunate grown-up people, whom their noise distracts and their questions interrupt. Within doors, in short, I am one of the many persons who like children in their places—that is to say, in any place where I am not. But out of doors there is no such limitation; from the gipsy urchins under a hedge, to the little lords and ladies in a ducal demesne, they are charming to look at, to watch and to listen to. Dogs are less amusing, flowers are less beautiful, trees themselves are less picturesque.

I cannot even mention them without recalling to my mind twenty groups or single figures, of which Gainsborough would have made at once a picture and a story. The little aristocratic-looking girl, for instance,

of some five or six years old, whom I used to see two years ago, every morning at breakfast-time, tripping along the most romantic street in England (the High-street in Oxford), attended, or escorted, it is doubtful which, by a superb Newfoundland dog, curly and black, carrying in his huge mouth her tiny work-bag, or her fairy parasol, and guarding with so true a fidelity his pretty young lady, whilst she, on her part, queened it over her lordly subject with such diverting gravity, seeming to guide him whilst he guided her—led, whilst she thought herself leading, and finally deposited at her daily school, with as much regularity as the same sagacious quadruped would have displayed in carrying his master's glove, or fetching a stick out of the water. How I should like to see a portrait of that fair demure elegant child, with her full, short frock, her frilled trowsers, and her blue kid shoes, threading her way, by the aid of her sable attendant, through the many small impediments of the crowded streets of Oxford.

Or the pretty scene of childish distress which I saw last winter on my way to East Court—a distress which told its own story as completely as the picture of the broken pitcher! Driving rapidly along the beautiful road from Eversley Bridge to Finchamstead, up hill and down; on the one side a wide shelving bank, dotted with fine old oaks and beeches, intermingled with thorn and birch, and magnificent holly, and edging into Mr

Palmer's forest-like woods ; on the other, an open hilly country, studded with large single trees. In the midst of this landscape, rich and lovely even in winter, in the very middle of the road, stood two poor cottage children, a year or two younger than the damsel of Oxford, a large basket dangling from the hand of one of them, and a heap of barley-meal—the barley-meal that should have been in the basket—the week's dinner of the pig, scattered in the dirt at their feet. Poor little dears ! how they cried. They could not have told their story, had not their story told itself—they had been carrying the basket between them, and somehow it had slipped. A shilling remedied that disaster, and sent away all parties smiling and content.

Then again, this very afternoon, the squabbles of those ragged urchins at cricket on the common—a disputed point of *out* or *not out* ? The eight-year-old boy who will not leave his wicket ; the seven and nine-year-old imps who are trying to force him from his post ; the wrangling partisans of all ages, from ten downwards, the two contending *sides*, who are bawling for victory ; the grave ragged umpire, a lad of twelve, with a stick under his arm, who is solemnly listening to the cause ; and the younger and less interested spectators, some just breeched, and others still condemned to the ignominious petticoat, who are sitting on the bank, and wondering which party will carry the day !

What can be prettier than this, unless it be the fellow-group of girls, sisters, I presume, to the boys, who are laughing and screaming round the great oak: then darting to and fro, in a game compounded of hide-and-seek and base-ball. Now tossing the ball high, high amidst the branches; now flinging it low along the common, bowling, as it were, almost within reach of the cricketers; now pursuing, now retreating, running, jumping, shouting, bawling—almost shrieking with ecstasy; whilst one sun-burnt black-eyed gipsy throws forth her laughing face from behind the trunk of the old oak, and then flings a newer and a gayer ball—fortunate purchase of some hoarded sixpence—amongst her admiring playmates. Happy, happy children! that one hour of innocent enjoyment is worth an age!

It was, perhaps, my love of picturesque children that first attracted my attention towards a little maiden of some six or seven years old, whom I used to meet, sometimes going to school, and sometimes returning from it, during a casual residence in the county town of B——. It was a very complete specimen of childish beauty, what would be called a picture of a child—the very study for a painter; with the round, fair, rosy face, coloured like the apple-blossom; the large, bright, open blue eyes; the broad white forehead, shaded by brown clustering curls, and the lips scarlet as winter berries. But it was the expression of that blooming countenance







which formed its principal charm; every look was a smile, and a smile which had in it as much of sweetness as of gaiety. She seemed, and she was, the happiest and the most affectionate of created beings. Her dress was singularly becoming. A little straw bonnet, of a shape calculated not to conceal, but to display, the young pretty face, and a full short frock of gentianella blue, which served, by its brilliant yet contrasted colouring, to enhance the brightness of that brightest complexion. Tripping along to school with her neat covered basket in her chubby hand, the little lass was perfect.

I could not help looking and admiring, and stopping to look, and the pretty child stopped too, and dropped her little curtsy; and then I spoke, and then she spoke—for she was too innocent, too unfearing, too modest, to be shy—so that Susy and I soon became acquainted; and in a very few days the acquaintanceship was extended to a fine open-countenanced man, and a sweet-looking and intelligent young woman, Susan's father and mother—one or other of whom used to come almost every evening to meet their darling on her return from school; for she was an only one—the sole offspring of a marriage of love which was, I believe, reckoned unfortunate by everybody except the parties concerned; they felt and knew that they were happy.

I soon learnt their simple history. William Jervis, the only son of a rich carpenter, had been attached

almost from childhood, to his fair neighbour, Mary Price, the daughter of a haberdasher in a great way of business, who lived in the same street. The carpenter, a plodding, frugal artisan of the old school, who trusted to indefatigable industry and undeviating sobriety for getting on in life, had an instinctive mistrust of the more dashing and speculative tradesman, and even, in the height of his prosperity, looked with cold and doubtful eyes on his son's engagement. Mr. Price's circumstances, however, seemed, and at the time were, so flourishing, his offers so liberal, and his daughter's character so excellent, that to refuse his consent would have been an unwarrantable stretch of authority. All that our prudent carpenter could do was to delay the union, in hopes that something might still occur to break it off; and when, ten days before the time finally fixed for the marriage, the result of an unsuccessful speculation placed Mr. Price's name in the *Gazette*, most heartily did he congratulate himself on the foresight which, as he hoped, had saved him from the calamity of a portionless daughter-in-law. He had, however, miscalculated the strength of his son's affection for poor Mary, as well as the firm principle of honour which regarded their long and every-way-sanctioned engagement as a bond little less sacred than wedlock itself, and on Mr. Price's dying within a very few months, of that death which, although not included in the bills of

mortality, is yet but too truly recognised by the popular phrase, a broken heart, William Jervis, after vainly trying every mode of appeal to his obdurate father, married the orphan girl—in the desperate hope that, the step being once taken, and past all remedy, an only child would find forgiveness for an offence attended by so many extenuating circumstances.

But here, too, William, in his turn, miscalculated the invincible obstinacy of his father's character. He ordered his son from his house and his presence, dismissed him from his employment, forbade his very name to be mentioned in his hearing, and up to the time at which our story begins, comported himself exactly as if he never had had a child.

William, a dutiful, affectionate son, felt severely the deprivation of his father's affection, and Mary felt for her William; but so far as regarded their worldly concerns, I am almost afraid to say how little they regretted their change of prospects. Young, healthy, active, wrapt up in each other and in their lovely little girl, they found small difficulty and no hardship in earning—he by his trade, at which he was so good a workman as always to command high wages, and she by needlework—sufficient to supply their humble wants; and when the kindness of Walter Price, Mary's brother, who had again opened a shop in the town, enabled them to send their little Susy to a school of a better order than



their own funds would have permitted, their utmost ambition seemed gratified.

So far was speedily made known to me. I discovered also that Mrs. Jervis possessed, in a remarkable degree, the rare quality called taste—a faculty which does really appear to be almost intuitive in some minds, let metaphysicians laugh as they may; and the ladies of B——, delighted to find an opportunity of at once exercising their benevolence, and procuring exquisitely fancied caps and bonnets at half the cost which they had been accustomed to pay to the fine yet vulgar milliner who had hitherto ruled despotically over the fashions of the place, did not fail to rescue their new and interesting protégée from the drudgery of sewing white seam, and of poring over stitching and button-holes.

For some years all prospered in their little household. Susy grew in stature and in beauty, retaining the same look of intelligence and sweetness which had in her early childhood fascinated all beholders. She ran some risk of being spoilt (only that, luckily, she was of the grateful, unselfish, affectionate nature which seems unspoilable) by the admiration of Mrs. Jervis's customers, who, whenever she took home their work, would send for the pretty Susan into the parlour, and give her fruit and sweetmeats, or whatever cates might be likely to please a childish appetite, which, it was observed, she contrived, whenever she could do so without offence,

to carry home to her mother, whose health, always delicate, had lately appeared more than usually precarious. Even her stern grandfather, now become a master builder, and one of the richest tradesmen in the town, had been remarked to look long and wistfully on the lovely little girl, as, holding by her father's hand, she tripped lightly to church, although, on that father himself, he never deigned to cast a glance ; so that the more acute denizens of B—— used to prognosticate that, although William was disinherited, Mr. Jervis's property would not go out of the family.

So matters continued awhile. Susan was eleven years old, when a stunning and unexpected blow fell upon them all. Walter Price, her kind uncle, who had hitherto seemed as prudent as he was prosperous, became involved in the stoppage of a great Glasgow house, and was obliged to leave the town ; whilst her father, having unfortunately accepted bills drawn by him, under an assurance that they should be provided for long before they became due, was thrown into prison for the amount. There was, indeed, a distant hope that the affairs of the Glasgow house might come round, or, at least, that Walter Price's concerns might be disentangled from theirs, and, for this purpose, his presence, as a man full of activity and intelligence, was absolutely necessary in Scotland ; but this prospect was precarious and distant. In the meantime, William Jervis lay lingering in prison, his creditor

relying avowedly on the chance that a rich father could not, for shame, allow his son to perish there; whilst Mary, sick, helpless, and desolate, was too broken-spirited to venture an application to a quarter, from whence any slight hope that she might otherwise have entertained, was entirely banished by the recollection that the penalty had been incurred through a relation of her own.

“Why should I go to him?” said poor Mary to herself, when referred by Mr. Barnard, her husband’s creditor, to her wealthy father-in-law—“why trouble him? He will never pay my brother’s debt: he would only turn me from his door, and, perhaps, speak of Walter and William in a way that would break my heart.” And with her little daughter in her hand, she walked slowly back to a small room that she had hired near the gaol, and sate down sadly and heavily to the daily diminishing millinery work, which was now the only resource of the once happy family.

In the afternoon of the same day, as old Mr. Jervis was seated in a little summer house at the end of his neat garden, gravely smoking his pipe over a tumbler of spirits and water, defiling the delicious odour of his honeysuckles and sweet-briars by the two most atrocious smells on this earth—the fumes of tobacco and of gin—his meditations, probably none of the most agreeable, were interrupted, first by a modest single knock at the

front door, which, the intermediate doors being open, he heard distinctly, then by a gentle parley, and, lastly, by his old housekeeper's advance up the gravel walk, followed by a very young girl, who approached him hastily yet tremblingly, caught his rough hand with her little one, lifted up a sweet face, where smiles seemed breaking through her tears, and, in an attitude between standing and kneeling—an attitude of deep reverence—faltered, in a low, broken voice, one low, broken word—“Grandfather !”

“How came this child here ?” exclaimed Mr. Jervis, endeavouring to disengage the hand which Susan had now secured within both hers—“how dared you let her in, Norris, when you knew my orders respecting the whole family ?”

“How dared I let her in ?” returned the house-keeper—“how could I help it ? Don't we all know that there is not a single house in the town where little Susan (heaven bless her dear face !) is not welcome ? Don't the very gaolers themselves let her into the prison before hours and after hours ? And don't the sheriff himself, for as strict as he is said to be, sanction it ? Speak to your grandfather, Susy love—don't be dashed !”\*

\* Dashed—frightened. I believe this expression, though frequently used there, is not confined to Berkshire. It is one of the pretty provincial phrases by which Richardson has contrived to give a charming rustic grace to the early letters of Pamela.

and, with this encouraging exhortation, the kind-hearted housekeeper retired.

Susan continued, clasping her grandfather's hand, and leaning her face over it as if to conceal the tears which poured down her cheeks like rain.

"What do you want with me, child?" at length interrupted Mr. Jervis in a stern voice. "What brought you here?"

"Oh, grandfather! Poor father's in prison!"

"I did not put him there," observed Mr. Jervis, coldly: "you must go to Mr. Barnard on that affair."

"Mother did go to him this morning," replied Susan, "and he told her that she must apply to you——"

"Well!" exclaimed the grandfather, impatiently.

"But she said she dared not, angry as you were with her—more especially as it is through uncle Walter's misfortune that all this misery has happened. Mother dared not come to you."

"She was right enough there," returned Mr. Jervis. "So she sent you?"

"No, indeed, she knows nothing of my coming. She sent me to carry home a cap to Mrs. Taylor, who lives in the next street, and as I was passing the door it came into my head to knock—and then Mrs. Norris brought me here—Oh, grandfather! I hope I have not done wrong! I hope you are not angry!—but if you were to see how sad and pale poor father looks in that dismal



prison ; and poor mother, how sick and ill she is, how her hand trembles when she tries to work. Oh, grandfather : if you could but see them you would not wonder at my boldness."

"All this comes of trusting to a speculating knave like Walter Price:" observed Mr. Jervis, rather as a soliloquy than to the child, who, however, heard and replied to the remark.

"He was very kind to me, was uncle Walter ! He put me to school to learn reading and writing, and cyphering, and all sorts of needle-work ; not a charity-school, because he wished me to be amongst decent children, and not to learn bad ways. And he has written to offer to come to prison himself, if father wishes it—only—I don't understand about business—but even Mr. Barnard says that the best chance of recovering the money is his remaining at liberty ; and indeed, indeed, grandfather, my uncle Walter is not so wicked as you think for—indeed he is not."

"This child is grateful !" was the thought that passed through her grandfather's mind, but he did not give it utterance. He, however, drew her closer to him, and seated her in the summer-house at his side. "So you can read and write, and keep accounts, and do all sorts of needle-work, can you, my little maid ? And you can run of errands, doubtless, and are handy about a house. Should you like to live with me and Norris,

and make my shirts, and read the newspaper to me of an evening, and learn to make puddings and pies, and be my own little Susan ? Eh ?—Should you like this ? ”

“ Oh, grandfather ! ” exclaimed Susan, enchanted.

“ And water the flowers,” pursued Mr. Jervis, “ and root out the weeds, and gather the beau-pots ? Is not this a nice garden, Susy ? ”

“ Oh, beautiful, dear grandfather, beautiful ! ”

“ And you would like to live with me in this pretty house and this beautiful garden—should you, Susy ? ”

“ Oh, yes, dear grandfather ! ”

“ And never wish to leave me ? ”

“ Oh, never ! never ! ”

“ Nor to see the dismal gaol again—the dismal, dreary gaol ? ”

“ Never !—but father is to live here too ? ” enquired Susan, interrupting herself—“ father and mother ? ”

“ No ! ” replied her grandfather—“ neither of them. It was you whom I asked to live here with me. I have nothing to do with them, and you must choose between us.”

“ They not live here ! I to leave my father and my mother—my own dear mother, and she so sick ! my own dear father, and he in a gaol ! Oh, grandfather, you cannot mean it—you cannot be so cruel ! ”

“ There is no cruelty in the matter, Susan. I give you the offer of leaving your parents, and living with

me ; but I do not compel you to accept it. You are an intelligent little girl, and perfectly capable of choosing for yourself. But I beg you to take notice that, by remaining with them, you will not only share, but increase their poverty ; whereas, with me you will not only enjoy every comfort yourself, but relieve them from the burthen of your support."

"It is not a burthen," replied Susan, firmly—"I know that, young, and weak, and ignorant as I am now, I am yet of some use to my dear mother—and of some comfort to my dear father ; and every day I shall grow older and stronger, and more able to be a help to them both. And to leave them ! to live here in plenty, whilst they were starving ! to be gathering posies, whilst they were in prison ! Oh, grandfather ! I should die of the very thought. I thank you for your offer," continued she, rising, and dropping her little curtsy—"but my choice is made. Good evening, grandfather !"

"Don't be in such a hurry, Susy," rejoined her grandfather, shaking the ashes from his pipe, taking the last sip of his gin and water, and then proceeding to adjust his hat and wig—"don't be in such a hurry ; you and I shan't part so easily. You're a dear little girl, and since you won't stay with me, I must e'en go with you. The father and mother who brought up such a child, must be worth bringing home. So, with your good leave, Miss Susan, we'll go and fetch them."

And, in the midst of Susy's rapturous thanks, her kisses, and her tears, out they sallied ; and the money was paid, and the debtor released, and established with his overjoyed wife, in the best room of Mr. Jervis's pretty habitation, to the unspeakable gratitude of the whole party, and the extatic delight of the CARPENTER'S DAUGHTER.

THE GENERAL AND HIS LADY





## THE GENERAL AND HIS LADY

ALL persons of a certain standing in life, remember—for certainly nothing was ever more unforgettable—the great scarlet fever of England, when volunteering was the order of the day ; when you could scarcely meet with a man who was not, under some denomination or other, a soldier ; when a civil subject could hardly find a listener ; when little boys played at reviewing, and young ladies learned the sword exercise. It was a fine ebullition of national feeling—of loyalty and of public spirit, and cannot be looked back to without respect ; but, at the moment, the strange contrasts—the perpetual discrepancies—and the comical self-importance which it produced and exhibited, were infinitely diverting. I was a very little girl at the time ; but even now I cannot recollect without laughing, the appearance of a cornet of yeomanry cavalry, who might have played Falstaff without stuffing, and was obliged to complete his military decorations by wearing (and how he contrived to keep up the slippery girdle, one can hardly imagine) three silken sashes sewed into one ! To this day, too, I remember the

chuckling delight with which a worthy linen-draper of my acquaintance heard himself addressed as Captain, whilst measuring a yard of ribbon ; pretending to make light of the appellation, but evidently as proud of his title as a newly dubbed knight, or a peer of the last edition ; and I never shall forget the astonishment with which I beheld a field-officer, in his double epaulettes, advance obsequiously to the carriage-door, to receive an order for five shillings worth of stationery ! The prevailing spirit fell in exactly with the national character,—loyal, patriotic, sturdy, and independent ; very proud, and a little vain ; fond of excitement, and not indifferent to personal distinction ; the whole population borne along by one laudable and powerful impulse, and yet each man preserving, in the midst of that great leveller, military discipline, his individual peculiarities and blameless self-importance. It was a most amusing era !

In large country towns, especially where they mustered two or three different corps, and the powerful stimulant of emulation was super-added to the original martial fury, the goings on of these Captain Pattypans furnished a standing comedy, particularly when aided by the solemn etiquette and strong military spirit of their wives, who took precedence according to the rank of their husbands, from the colonel's lady down to the corporal's, and were as complete martialists, as proud of the services of their respective regiments, and as much impressed with the

importance of field-days and reviews, as if they had actually mounted the cockade and handled the firelock in their own proper persons. Foote's inimitable farce was more than realised ; and the ridicules of that period have only escaped being perpetuated in a new " Mayor of Garratt," by the circumstance of the whole world, dramatists and all, being involved in them. " The lunacy was so ordinary, that the whippers were in *arms* too."

That day is past. Even the yeomanry cavalry, the last lingering remnant of the volunteer system, whom I have been accustomed to see annually parade through the town of B., with my pleasant friend Captain M. at their head,—that respectable body, of which the band always appeared to me so much more numerous than the corps,—even that respectable body is dissolved ; whilst the latest rag of the infantry service—the long-preserved uniform and cocked hat of my old acquaintance, Dr. R., whilome physician to the B. Association, figured last summer as a scarecrow, stuffed with straw, and perched on a gate, an old gun tucked under its arm, to frighten the sparrows from his cherry-orchard ! Except the real soldiers, and every now and then some dozen of fox-hunters at a hunt-ball (whose usual dress uniform, by the way, scarlet over black, makes them look just like a flight of ladybirds), excepting these gallant sportsmen, and the real *bonâ fide* officers, one cannot now see a red coat for love or money. The glory of the volunteers is departed !

In the meantime, I owe to them one of the pleasantest recollections of my early life.

It was towards the beginning of the last war, when the novelty and freshness of the volunteering spirit had somewhat subsided, and the government was beginning to organize a more regular defensive force, under the name of local militia, that our old friend Colonel Sanford was appointed, with the rank of brigadier general, to the command of the district in which we resided. Ever since I could recollect, I have known Colonel Sanford—indeed a little brother of mine, who died at the age of six months, had had the honour to be his godson; and from my earliest remembrance, the good Colonel—fie upon me, to forget his brigadiership!—the good General had been set down by myself, as well as by the rest of the world, for a confirmed old bachelor. His visits to our house had, indeed, been only occasional, since he had been almost constantly on active service, in different quarters of the globe; so that we had merely caught a sight of him as he passed from the East Indies to the West, or in his still more rapid transit, from Gibraltar to Canada. For full a dozen years, however (and further, the recollection of a young lady, of sixteen, could hardly be expected to extend), he had seemed to be a gentleman very considerably on the wrong side of fifty,—“or, by'r Lady inclining to three score,”—and that will constitute an old bachelor, in the eyes of any young lady in Christendom.



His appearance was not calculated to diminish that impression. In his person, General Sanford was tall, thin, and erect ; as stiff and perpendicular as a ramrod ! with a bald head, most exactly powdered ; a military queue ; a grave, formal countenance ; and a complexion, partly tanned and partly frozen, by frequent exposure, to the vicissitudes of different climates, into one universal and uniform tint of reddish brown or brownish red.

His disposition was in good keeping with this solemn exterior—grave and saturnine. He entered little into ladies' conversation, with whom, indeed, he seldom came much in contact, and for whose intellect he was apt to profess a slight shade of contempt—an unhappy trick, to which your solemn wiseacre is sometimes addicted. All men, I fear, entertain the opinion ; but the clever ones discreetly keep it to themselves. With other gentlemen he did hold grave converse, on politics, the weather, the state of the roads, the news of the day, and other gentlemanly topics ; and when much at ease in his company, he would favour them with a few prosing stories, civil and military. One, in particular, was of formidable length. I have seen a friend of his wince as he began, "When I was in Antigua."—For the rest, the good General was an admirable person ; a gentleman by birth, education, and character ; a man of the highest honour, the firmest principles, and the purest benevolence. He was an excellent officer, also, of the old school ; one who

had seen much service; was a rigid disciplinarian, and somewhat of a Martinet. Just the man to bring the new levies into order, although not unlikely to look with considerable scorn on the holiday soldiers, who had never seen any thing more nearly resembling a battle, than a sham fight at a review.

He paid us a visit, of course, when he came to be installed into his new office, and to take a house at B., his destined head quarters; and after the first hearty congratulations on his promotion, his old friend, a joker by profession, began rallying him, as usual, on the necessity of taking a wife; on which, instead of returning his customary grave negative, the General stammered, looked foolish, and, incredible as it may seem that a blush could be seen through such a complexion, actually blushed; and when left alone with his host, after dinner, in lieu of the much dreaded words, "When I was in Antigua!" seriously requested his advice on the subject of matrimony: which that sage counsellor, certain that a marriage was settled, and not quite sure that it had not already taken place, immediately gave, in the most satisfactory manner; and before the conversation was finished, was invited to attend the wedding, on the succeeding Thursday.

The next time that we saw the General, he was accompanied by a lovely little girl, whom he introduced as his wife, but who might readily have passed for his granddaughter. I wanted a month of sixteen, and I was then,

and am now, perfectly convinced that Mrs. Sanford was my junior. The fair bride had been a ward of the bridegroom's—the orphan, and, I believe, destitute daughter of a brother officer. He had placed her, many years back, at a respectable country boarding-school, where she remained until his new appointment; and, as he was pleased to say, his friends' suggestions induced him to resolve upon matrimony, and look about for a wife as a necessary appendage to his official situation.

It is probable that his wife's exceeding beauty might have had something to do with his resolution as well as with his choice. I have never seen a lovelier creature. Her figure was small, round, and girlish, full of grace and symmetry. Her face had a child-like purity, and brilliancy of colouring; an alternation of blush and smile, a sweetness and innocence of expression, such as might become a Hebe—only still more youthful than the goddess of youth. Her manners were exactly those of a child come home for the holidays—shy and bashful, and shrinking from strangers; playful and affectionate with those whom she loved, especially her husband, who doted on her, and of whom she was very fond—and shewing, in the midst of her timidity and childishness, considerable acuteness and powers of observation.

At first she seemed, as well she might be, quite bewildered by the number of persons who came to visit her. For, living in a large town, and holding, in right

of her husband's office, a station of no small importance in the county, every person, of the slightest gentility in the town and neighbourhood, the whole visiting population of these, in general, very distinct and separate societies, thought proper to wait upon Mrs. Sanford. Mrs. Sanford was the fashion of B., and of B'shire. "Not to know her, argued yourself unknown." All the town and all the country called ; and all the town invited her to tea, and all the country requested her company to dinner : and she, puzzled, perplexed, and amazed, hardly knowing by sight one individual of her immediate acquaintance ; unable to distinguish between one person and another, often forgetting titles ; never remembering names ; and ignorant as an infant of artificial distinctions, made twenty blunders in an hour ; and kept the poor General, as punctilious an observer of the duties of society as of the duties of the service, in a perpetual state of fidget and alarm. Her mistakes were innumerable—she mislaid invitations, forgot engagements, mismatched her company, gave the mayor of B. the precedence of the county member, and hath been heard to ask an old bachelor after his wife, and an old maid after her children. There was no end to Mrs. Sanford's blunders. The old Brigade-Major, a veteran of the General's own standing, lame of a leg, and with a prodigious scar across his forehead, was kept on the constant stump with explanatory messages and conciliatory embassies, and declared that

he underwent much harder duty in that service than ever he had performed in his official capacity of drilling the awkward squad. The General, not content with dispatching his *aide-de-camp*, exhausted himself in elaborate apologies; but embassies, apologies, and explanations were all unnecessary. Nobody could be angry with Mrs. Sanford. There was no resisting the charm of her blushing youthfulness, her pleading voice, her ready confession of error, and her evident sorrow for all her little sins, whether of ignorance or heedlessness;—notwithstanding her sweetness and simplicity. Even offended self-love, the hardest to appease of all the passions, yielded to the artlessness of Mrs. Sanford.

She, on her part, liked nothing so well as to steal away from her troublesome popularity, her visitors, and her fine clothes, to the ease and freedom of the country; to put on a white frock and a straw bonnet, and run about the woods and fields with some young female friend, primrosing or birds'-nesting, according to the season. I was her usual companion in these rambles, and enjoyed them, perhaps, as much as she did, but in a far quieter way. Her animal spirits seemed inexhaustible; I never knew her weary, and, strong, agile, and entirely devoid of bodily fear, the thought of danger never seemed to come across her. How she enjoyed spending a long day at our house! now bounding over a ditch to gather a tuft of wild flowers; now climbing a



pollard, to look for a bird's nest ; now driving through the lanes in a donkey-chaise ; now galloping across the common on a pony ; now feeding the chickens ; now milking the cows ; now weeding the gravel walks ; now making hay ; and now reaping. These were her delights ! All her pleasures were equally childish : she cherished abundance of pets, such as school-girls love ; kept silkworms, dormice, and canary birds ; a parrot, a squirrel, and a monkey ; three lap-dogs, and a Persian cat ; enjoyed a fair, and was enchanted with a pantomime ; always supposing that her party did not consist of fine people or of strangers, but was composed of those to whom she was accustomed, and who were as well disposed to merriment and good-humour as herself.

With regard to accomplishments, she knew what was commonly taught in a country school above twenty years ago, and nothing more : played a little, sang a little, talked a little indifferent French ; painted shells and roses, not particularly like nature, on card racks and hand screens ; danced admirably ; and was the best player at battledore and shuttlecock, hunt-the-slipper, and blind-man's-buff in the county. Nothing could exceed the glee with which, in any family where she was intimate, she would join the children in a game of romps, herself the gayest and happiest child of the party.

For cards she had no genius. Even the noise and nonsense of a round-table could not reconcile her to

those bits of painted pasteboard. This was unlucky. It is true that the General, who played a good rubber, and looked upon it, next to a review or a battle, as the most serious business of his life, and who had moreover a settled opinion that no woman had intellect enough to master the game, would hardly have wished to have been her partner at the whist-table ; but he also loved a snug party at piquet, just to keep him awake after dinner, and would have liked exceedingly that Mrs. Sanford should have known enough of the rules to become a decent antagonist. He was not unreasonable in his expectations ; he did not desire that she should play well enough to win. He only wanted her to understand sufficient of the game to lose in a creditable manner. But it would not do ; she was unconquerably stupid ; never dealt the right number of cards ; never showed her point ; was ignorant even of the common terms of the art ; did not know a quart from a quint, or a pique from a repique ; could not tell when she was capotted. There was no comfort in beating her, so the poor General was fain to accept his old Brigade-Major as a substitute, who gave him three points and beat him.

In other respects she was an excellent wife—gentle, affectionate, and sweet-tempered. She accommodated herself admirably to all the General's ways, listened to his admonitions with deference, and to his stories with attention, the formidable one, beginning, " When I was

in Antigua," not excepted ; was kind to the old Brigade-Major ; and when he, a confirmed old bachelor, joined his patron in certain dissertations on the natural inferiority of the sex, heard them patiently, and if she smiled, took good care they should not find her out.

To be sure, her carelessness did occasionally get her husband into a scrape. Once, for instance, when he, being inspecting certain corps twenty miles off, she undertook to bring his dress clothes, for the purpose of attending a ball given in his honour, and forgot his new inexpressibles, thereby putting the poor General to the trouble and expense of sending an express after the missing garment, and keeping him a close prisoner till midnight, in expectation of the return of his messenger. Another time, he being in London, and the trusty Major also absent, she was commissioned to inform him of the day fixed for a grand review, sate down for the purpose, wrote a long letter full of chit-chat—and he could not abide long letters—never mentioned military affairs, and on being reminded of her omission, crammed the important intelligence into a crossed postscript under the seal, which the General, with his best spectacles, could not have deciphered in a month ! so that the unlucky commander never made his appearance on the ground, and but for a forty years' reputation for exactness and punctuality, which made any excuse look like truth, would have fallen into sad disgrace at head-quarters.

In process of time, however, even these little errors ceased. She grew tall, and her mind developed itself with her person ; still lively, ardent, and mercurial in her temperament, with an untiring spirit of life and motion, and a passionate love of novelty and gaiety, her playfulness ripened into intelligence, her curiosity became rational, and her delight in the country deepened into an intense feeling of the beauties of nature. Thrown amidst a large and varying circle, she became, in every laudable sense of the phrase, a perfect woman of the world. Before a change in the volunteer system, and a well-merited promotion, took the General from B., she had learned to manage her town visits and her country visits, to arrange *soirées* and dinner parties, to give balls, and to plan picnics, and was the life and charm of the neighbourhood. I would not even be sure that she had not learned piquet ; for lovely as she was, and many as there were to tell her that she was lovely, her husband was always her first object, and her whole conduct seemed guided by the spirit of that beautiful line, in the most beautiful of ballads :

For auld Robin Gray's been a gude man to me.

Since his death—for she has been long a widow—Lady Sanford—have I not said that the good General became Sir Thomas before his decease ?—has lived mostly on the Continent, indulging, but always with the highest

reputation, her strong taste for what is gayest in artificial life, and grandest in natural scenery. I have heard of her sometimes amongst the brilliant crowds of the Roman carnival, sometimes amidst the wild recesses of the Pyrenees; now looking down the crater of Vesuvius; now waltzing at a court ball at Vienna. She has made a trip to Athens, and has talked of attempting the ascent of Mont Blanc! At present she is in England, for a friend of mine saw her the other day at the Cowes regatta, full of life and glee, almost as pretty as ever, and quite as delightful. Of course, being also a well-dowered and childless widow, she has had lovers by the hundred, and offers by the score; but she always says that she has made up her mind not to marry again, and I have no doubt of her keeping her resolution. She loves her liberty too dearly to part with the blessing; and, well as she got on with Sir Thomas, I think she has had enough of matrimony. Besides, she has now reached a sedate age, and there would be a want of discretion, which hitherto she has never wanted, in venturing——

“What was that you said, ma’am? The newspaper! Have I read the newspaper?—People will always talk to me when I am writing!—Have I read to-day’s paper? No; what do you wish me to look at? This column: Police reports—new publications—births?—oh, the marriages! ‘Yesterday, at Bow Church, Mr. Smith to Miss Brown.’ Not that? Oh! the next!—‘On Friday last,



at Cheltenham, by the Venerable the Archdeacon P——, Dennis O'Brien, Esq., of the —th regiment '—But what do I care for Dennis O'Brien, Esq. ? ' What's Hecuba to me, or I to Hecuba ? ' I never heard of the gentleman before in my days. Oh ! it's the lady ! ' Dennis O'Brien, Esq., to Lady Sanford '—' Angels and ministers of grace defend us ! ' here is a surprise !—' to Lady Sanford.' Ay, my eyes did not deceive me, it's no mistake ; ' relict of the late Major-General Sir Thomas Sanford, K.C.B.' And so much for a widow's resolution ! and a gay widow's too ! I would not have answered for one of the demure. A general's widow, at the ripe age of forty (oh, age of indiscretion !), married to an ensign in a marching regiment ; young enough to be her son, I warrant me, and as poor as a church mouse ! If her old husband could but know what was going forward, he would chuckle in his grave at so notable a proof of the weakness of the sex—so irresistible a confirmation of his theory. Lady Sanford married again ! Who, after this, shall put faith in woman ? Lady Sanford married again ! ”



A COUNTRY APOTHECARY



## A COUNTRY APOTHECARY

ONE of the most important personages in a small country town is the apothecary. He takes rank next after the rector and the attorney, and before the curate ; and could be much less easily dispensed with than either of those worthies, not merely as holding “ fate and physic ” in his hand, but as the general, and as it were official, associate, adviser, comforter and friend of all ranks and all ages, of high and low, rich and poor, sick and well. I am no despiser of dignities ; but twenty emperors shall be less intensely missed in their wide dominions than such a man as my friend John Hallett in his own small sphere.

The spot which was favoured with the residence of this excellent person was the small town of Hazelby, in Dorsetshire ; a pretty little place, where every thing seems at a stand-still. It was originally built in the shape of the letter T ; a long broad market-place (still so called, although the market be gone) serving for the perpendicular stem, traversed by a straight, narrow, horizontal street, to answer for the top line. Not one addition has occurred to interrupt this architectural



regularity, since, fifty years ago, a rich London tradesman built, at the west end of the horizontal street, a wide-fronted single house, with two low wings, iron palisades before, and a fish-pond opposite, which still goes by the name of New Place, and is balanced, at the east end of the street, by an erection of nearly the same date, a large square dingy mansion enclosed within high walls, inhabited by three maiden sisters, and called, probably by way of nickname, the Nunnery. New Place being on the left of the road, and the Nunnery on the right, the T has now something of the air of the italic capital T, turned up at one end and down at the other. The latest improvements are the bow-window in the market-place, commanding the pavement both ways, which the late brewer, Andrews, threw out in his snug parlour some twenty years back, and where he used to sit smoking, with the sash up, in summer afternoons, enjoying himself, good man ; and the great room at the *Swan*, originally built by the speculative publican, Joseph Allwright, for an assembly-room. That speculation did not answer. The assembly, in spite of canvassing and patronage, and the active exertions of all the young ladies in the neighbourhood, dwindled away and died at the end of two winters : then it became a club-room for the hunt ; but the hunt quarrelled with Joseph's cookery : then a market-room for the farmers ; but the farmers (it was in the high-price time) quarrelled with Joseph's

wine : then it was converted into the magistrates' room—the bench ; but the bench and the market went away together, and there was an end of justicing : then Joseph tried the novel attraction (to borrow a theatrical phrase) of a billiard-table ; but, alas ! that novelty succeeded as ill as if it had been theatrical ; there were not customers enough to pay the marker : at last, it has merged finally in that unconscious receptacle of pleasure and pain, a post-office ; although Hazelby has so little to do with traffic of any sort—even the traffic of correspondence—that a saucy mail-coach will often carry on its small bag, and as often forget to call for the London bag in return.

In short, Hazelby is an insignificant place ;—my readers will look for it in vain in the map of Dorsetshire ;—it is omitted, poor dear town !—left out by the map-maker with as little remorse as a dropped letter !—and it is also an old-fashioned place. It has not even a cheap shop for female gear. Every thing in the one store which it boasts, kept by Martha Deane, linen-draper and haberdasher, is dear and good, as things were wont to be. You may actually get there thread made of flax, from the gouty, uneven, clumsy, shiny fabric, yclept whited-brown, to the delicate commodity of Lisle, used for darning muslin. I think I was never more astonished, from the mere force of habit, than when, on asking for thread, I was presented, instead of the pretty lattice-

wound balls or snowy reels of cotton with which that demand is usually answered, with a whole drawerful of skeins peeping from their blue papers—such skeins as in my youth a thrifty maiden would draw into the nicely-stitched compartments of that silken repository, a housewife, or fold into a congeries of graduated thread-papers, “fine by degrees, and beautifully less.” The very literature of Hazelby is doled out at the pastry-cook’s, in a little one-windowed shop kept by Matthew Wise. Tarts occupy one end of the counter, and reviews the other ; whilst the shelves are parcelled out between books, and dolls, and gingerbread. It is a question, by which of his trades poor Matthew gains least ; he is so shabby, so threadbare, and so starved.

Such a town would hardly have known what to do with a highly informed and educated surgeon, such as one now generally sees in that most liberal profession. My friend, John Hallett, suited it exactly. His predecessor, Mr. Simon Saunders, had been a small, wrinkled, spare old gentleman, with a short cough and a thin voice, who always seemed as if he needed an apothecary himself. He wore generally a full suit of drab, a flaxen wig of the sort called a Bob Jerom, and a very tight muslin stock ; a costume which he had adopted in his younger days in imitation of the most eminent physician of the next city, and continued to the time of his death. Perhaps the cough might have been originally an imitation

also, ingrafted on the system by habit. It had a most unsatisfactory sound, and seemed more like a trick than a real effort of nature. His talk was civil, prosy, and fidgety : much addicted to small scandal, and that kind of news which passes under the denomination of tittle-tattle, he was sure to tell one half of the town where the other drank tea, and recollected the blancmangers and jellies on a supper-table, or described a new gown, with as much science and unction as if he had been used to make jellies and wear gowns in his own person. Certain professional peculiarities might have favoured the supposition. His mode of practice was exactly that popularly attributed to old women. He delighted in innocent remedies—manna, magnesia, and camphor julep ; never put on a blister in his life ; and would sooner, from pure complaisance, let a patient die, than administer an unpalatable prescription.

So qualified, to say nothing of his gifts in tea-drinking, casino, and quadrille (whist was too many for him), his popularity could not be questioned. When he expired all Hazelby mourned. The lamentation was general. The women of every degree (to borrow a phrase from that great phrase-monger, Horace Walpole) “cried quarts ;” and the procession to the churchyard—that very churchyard to which he had himself attended so many of his patients—was now followed by all of them that remained alive.

If was felt that the successor of Mr. Simon Saunders would have many difficulties to encounter. My friend John Hallett "came, and saw, and overcame." John was what is usually called a rough diamond. Imagine a short, clumsy, stout-built figure, almost as broad as it is long, crowned by a bullet head, covered with shaggy brown hair, sticking out in every direction; the face round and solid, with a complexion originally fair, but dyed one red by exposure to all sorts of weather; open good-humoured eyes of a greenish cast, his admirers called them hazel; a wide mouth, full of large white teeth; a cocked-up nose, and a double chin; bearing altogether a strong resemblance to a print which I once saw hanging up in an alehouse parlour, of "the celebrated divine (to use the identical words of the legend) Doctor Martin Luther."

The condition of a country apothecary being peculiarly liable to the inclemency of the season, John's dress was generally such as might bid defiance to wind or rain, or snow or hail. If any thing, he wrapt up most in the summer, having a theory that people were never so apt to take cold as in hot weather. He usually wore a bear-skin great-coat, a silk handkerchief over his cravat, top boots on those sturdy pillars his legs, a huge pair of overalls, and a hat, which, from the day in which it first came into his possession to that in which it was thrown aside, never knew the comfort of being freed from



its oilskin—never was allowed to display the glossy freshness of its sable youth. Poor dear hat ! how its vanity (if hats have vanity) must have suffered ! For certain its owner had none, unless a lurking pride in his own bluffness and bluntness may be termed such. He piqued himself on being a plain downright Englishman, and on a voice and address pretty much like his apparel, rough, strong, and warm, fit for all weathers. A heartier person never lived.

In his profession he was eminently skilful, bold, confident, and successful. The neighbouring physicians liked to come after Mr. Hallett ; they were sure to find nothing to undo. And blunt and abrupt as was his general manner, he was kind and gentle in a sick-room ; only nervous disorders, the pet diseases of Mr. Simon Saunders, he could not abide. He made short work with them ; frightened them away as one does by children when they have the hiccough ; or if the malady were pertinacious and would not go, he fairly turned off the patient. Once or twice, indeed, on such occasions, the patient got the start, and turned him off ; Mrs. Emery, for instance, the lady's maid at New Place, most delicate and mincing of waiting-gentlewomen, motioned him from her presence ; and Miss Deane, daughter of Martha Deane, haberdasher, who, after completing her education at a boarding-school, kept a closet full of millinery in a little den behind her mamma's shop, and was by many

degrees the finest lady in Hazelby, was so provoked at being told by him that nothing ailed her, that, to prove her weakly condition, she pushed him by main force out of doors.

With these exceptions Mr. Hallett was the delight of the whole town, as well as of all the farm-houses within six miles round. He just suited the rich yeomanry, cured their diseases, and partook of their feasts; was constant at christenings, and a man of prime importance at weddings. A country merry-making was nothing without "the Doctor." He was "the very prince of good fellows"; had a touch of epicurism, which, without causing any distaste of his own homely fare, made dainties acceptable when they fell in his way; was a most absolute carver; prided himself upon a sauce of his own invention, for fish and game—"Hazelby sauce" he called it; and was universally admitted to be the best compounder of a bowl of punch in the county.

Besides these rare convivial accomplishments, his gay and jovial temper rendered him the life of the table. There was no resisting his droll faces, his droll stories, his jokes, his tricks, or his laugh—the most contagious cachinnation that ever was heard. Nothing in the shape of fun came amiss to him. He would join in a catch or roar out a solo, which might be heard a mile off; would play at hunt-the-slipper or blind-man's-buff; was a great man in a country dance, and upon very extraordi-

nary occasion would treat the company to a certain remarkable hornpipe, which put the walls in danger of tumbling about their ears, and belonged to him as exclusively as the Hazelby sauce. It was a sort of parody on a *pas seul* which he had once seen at the Opera-house, in which his face, his figure, his costume, his rich humour, and his strange, awkward, unexpected activity told amazingly. "The force of *frolic* could no farther go" than "the doctor's hornpipe." It was the climax of jollity.

But the chief scene of Mr. Hallett's gaiety lay out of doors, in a very beautiful spot, called The Down, a sloping upland, about a mile from Hazelby, a side view of which, with its gardens and orchards, its pretty church peeping from amongst lime and yew trees, and the fine piece of water, called Hazelby Pond, it commanded. The Down itself was an extensive tract of land covered with the finest verdure, backed by a range of hills, and surrounded by coppice-wood, large patches of which were scattered over the turf, like so many islands on an emerald sea. Nothing could be more beautiful or more impenetrable than these thickets: they were principally composed of birch, holly, hawthorn, and maple, woven together by garlands of woodbine, interwreathed and intertwined by bramble and briar, till even the sheep, although the bits of their snowy fleece left on the bushes bore witness to the attempt, could make no

way in the leafy mass. Here and there a huge oak or beech rose towering above the rich underwood ; and all around, as far as the eye could pierce, the borders of this natural shrubbery were studded with a countless variety of woodland flowers. When the old thorns were in blossom, or when they were succeeded by the fragrant woodbine and the delicate briar-rose, it was like a garden, if it were possible to fancy any garden so peopled with birds.\*

The only human habitation on this charming spot was the cottage of the shepherd, old Thomas Tolfrey, who, with his grand-daughter, Jemima, a light pretty maiden of fourteen, tended the flocks on the Down ; and the rustic carols of this little lass and the tinkling of the sheep-bells were usually the only sounds that mingled with the sweet songs of the feathered tribes.

\* A circumstance of some curiosity in natural history occurred for several successive years on this Down. There was constantly in one of the thickets a blackbird's nest, of which the young were distinguished by a striking peculiarity. The old birds (probably the same pair) were of the usual sable colour, but the plumage of their progeny was milk white, as white as a swan, without a single discoloured feather. They were always taken, and sold at high prices to the curious in such freaks of nature. The late Bishop of Winchester had a pair of them for a long time in the aviary at Farnham Castle ; they were hardy, and the male was a fine song-bird ; but all attempts to breed from them failed. They died, and " left the world no copy."

On Maydays and holidays, however, the thickets resounded with other notes of glee than those of the linnet and the woodlark. Fairs, revels, May-games and cricket-matches—all were holden on the Down and there would John Hallett sit, in his glory, universal umpire and referee of cricketer, wrestler, or back-sword-player, the happiest and greatest man in the field. Little *Jemima* never failed to bring her grandfather's arm-chair, and place it under the old oak for the good Doctor : I question whether John would have exchanged his throne for that of the king of England.

On these occasions he certainly would have been the better for that convenience, which he piqued himself on not needing—a partner. Generally speaking, he really, as he used to boast, did the business of three men ; but when a sickly season and a *Maying* happened to come together, I cannot help suspecting that the patients had the worst of it. Perhaps, however, a partner might not have suited him. He was sturdy and independent to the verge of a fault, and would not have brooked being called to account, or brought to a reckoning by any man under the sun ; still less could he endure the thought of that more important and durable copartnery—marriage. He was a most determined bachelor ; and so afraid of being mistaken for a wooer, or incurring the reputation of a gay deceiver, that he was as uncivil as his good nature would permit to every unwedded



female from sixteen to sixty, and had nearly fallen into some scrapes on that account with the spinsters of the town, accustomed to the soft silkiness of Mr. Simon Saunders; but they got used to it—it was the man's way; and there was an indirect flattery in his fear of their charms which the maiden ladies, especially the elder ones, found very mollifying; so he was forgiven.

In his shop and his household he had no need either of partner or of wife: the one was excellently managed by an old rheumatic journeyman, slow in speech and of vinegar aspect, who had been a pedagogue in his youth, and now used to limp about with his Livy in his pocket, and growl as he compounded the medicines over the bad latinity of the prescriptions; the other was equally well conducted by an equally ancient house-keeper and a cherry-cheeked niece, the orphan-daughter of his only sister, who kept everything within doors in the bright and shining order in which he delighted. John Hallett, notwithstanding the roughness of his aspect, was rather knick-knacky in his tastes; a great patron of small inventions, such as the *improved* ne plus ultra cork-screw, and the latest patent snuffers. He also trifled with horticulture, dabbled in tulips, was a connoisseur in pinks, and had gained a prize for polyanthuses. The garden was under the especial care of his pretty niece, Miss Susan, a grateful warm-hearted girl, who thought she never could do enough to please her good uncle, and prove her sense

of his kindness. He was indeed as fond of her as if he had been her father, and as kind.

Perhaps there was nothing very extraordinary in his goodness to the gentle and cheerful little girl who kept his walks so trim and his parlour so neat, who always met him with a smile and who (last and strongest tie to a generous mind) was wholly dependent on him—had no friend on earth but himself. There was nothing very uncommon in that. But John Hallett was kind to every one, even where the sturdy old English prejudices, which he cherished as virtues, might seem most likely to counteract his gentler feelings. One instance of his benevolence and of his delicacy shall conclude this sketch.

Several years ago an old French *émigré* came to reside at Hazelby. He lodged at Matthew Wise's, of whose twofold shop for cakes and novels I have before made honourable mention, in the low three-cornered room, with a closet behind it, which Matthew had the impudence to call his first floor. Little was known of him but that he was a thin, pale, foreign-looking gentleman, who shrugged his shoulders in speaking, took a great deal of snuff, and made a remarkably low bow. The few persons with whom he had any communication spoke with amusement of his bad English, and with admiration of his good humour; and it soon appeared, from a written paper placed in a conspicuous part of

Matthew's shop, that he was an Abbé, and that he would do himself the honour of teaching French to any of the nobility or gentry of Hazelby who might think fit to employ him. Pupils dropt in rather slowly. The curate's daughters, and the attorney's son, and Miss Deane the milliner—but she found the language difficult, and left off, asserting that M. l'Abbé's snuff made her nervous. At last poor M. l'Abbé fell ill himself, really ill, dangerously ill, and Matthew Wise went in all haste to summon Mr. Hallett. Now Mr. Hallett had such an aversion to a Frenchman, in general, as a cat has to a dog ; and was wont to erect himself into an attitude of defiance and wrath at the mere sight of the object of his antipathy. He hated and despised the whole nation, abhorred the language, and "would as lief," he assured Matthew, "have been called in to a toad." He went, however ; grew interested in the case, which was difficult and complicated ; exerted all his skill, and in about a month accomplished a cure.

By this time he had also become interested in his patient, whose piety, meekness, and resignation had won upon him in an extraordinary degree. The disease was gone, but a languor and lowness remained, which Mr. Hallett soon traced to a less curable disorder, poverty : the thought of the debt to himself evidently weighed on the poor Abbé's spirits, and our good apothecary at last determined to learn French purely to liquidate

his own long bill. It was the drollest thing in the world to see this pupil of fifty, whose habits were so entirely unfitted for a learner, conning his task ; or to hear him conjugating the verb *avoir*, or blundering through the first phrases of the easy dialogues. He was a most unpromising scholar, shuffled the syllables together in a manner that would seem incredible, and stumbled at every step of the pronunciation, against which his English tongue rebelled amain. Every now and then he solaced himself with a fluent volley of execrations in his own language, which the Abbé understood well enough to return, after rather a politer fashion, in French. It was a most amusing scene.—But the motive ! the generous, noble motive ! M. l'Abbé, after a few lessons, detected this delicate artifice, and, touched almost to tears, insisted on dismissing his pupil, who, on his side, declared that nothing should induce him to abandon his studies. At last they came to a compromise. The cherry-cheeked Susan took her uncle's post as a learner, which she filled in a manner much more satisfactory ; and the good old Frenchman not only allowed Mr. Hallett to administer gratis to his ailments, but partook of his Sunday dinner as long as he lived.

THE END

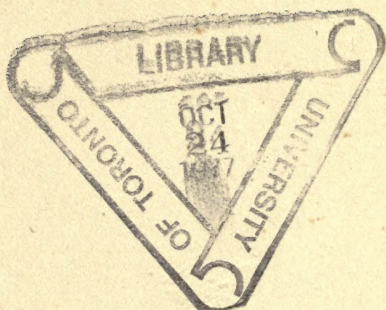












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